

What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **Boeing spent** another quarter in the red, though its net loss narrowed, as it poured more resources into developing new presidential jets and accelerating production of commercial aircraft. **B1**
- ◆ **The FAA asked** airlines to inspect hundreds of Boeing 737 MAX passenger jets for improperly installed cabin seats that could prove dangerous in the case of an emergency. **B5**
- ◆ **Major U.S. stock indexes** ended mixed, with the S&P 500 and Dow rising 0.2% and 1%, respectively, and the Nasdaq falling 0.2%. **B10**
- ◆ **Bank Indonesia Gov.** Perry Warjiyo stepped down in a surprise move that is likely to stoke worries about central bank independence in Southeast Asia's largest nation. **A7**
- ◆ **Apple launched** a product-leasing program with Klarna that will allow customers to pay monthly for new devices and then return, upgrade or buy them. **B1**
- ◆ **Visa logged higher** revenue for its latest quarter as consumers continued to spend even in the face of inflationary pressures. **B3**
- ◆ **CBS News is adding** several high-profile journalists to "60 Minutes" as new executive producer Nick Bilton reshapes the iconic newsmagazine. **B4**
- ◆ **Coca-Cola boosted** its earnings outlook for the year after the company's marketing efforts, including its World Cup campaign, helped drive volume. **B3**
- ◆ **FIFA, soccer's highest** governing body, is exploring raising more than \$4 billion by selling a stake in a new commercial venture. **B3**

Worldwide

- ◆ **Iran launched** a surprise ballistic-missile attack on American forces in Jordan, a violent escalation that piles new pressure on Trump to renew the war in earnest. **A1**
- ◆ **Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** met at the White House, navigating a growing rift five months after the two launched a war in Iran that has proven far more complex than either imagined. **A6**
- ◆ **Iran rejected** a proposal by Oman, which sits opposite Iran across the Strait of Hormuz, to evenly divide control of the waterway. **A6**
- ◆ **The Senate confirmed** Jay Clayton as director of national intelligence, placing a top federal prosecutor at the helm of an agency that underwent staff cuts in recent weeks. **A4**
- ◆ **The Trump administration** plans to end a subsidy program that helped hold down premiums for Medicare drug plans, potentially leaving many seniors to face higher rates for prescription coverage next year. **A3**
- ◆ **Rescue operations** were under way and more than 200,000 people were given evacuation orders after a 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck southern Japan. **A7**
- ◆ **A cabinet secretary,** Trump's niece and an Oscar-nominated director are among the potential targets of New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani's tax on luxury second homes. **A3**
- ◆ **The teenager who** committed a deadly mass shooting at a high school in Winder, Ga., in 2024 was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. **A5**

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Graham Praised as 'American Original'



TRIBUTES: President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance and members of the cabinet attend the funeral Tuesday for Sen. Lindsey Graham at Washington National Cathedral. The South Carolina Republican, a top adviser to Trump on foreign affairs, died July 11. **A4**

Meta's AI Spending Binge Runs Into Rising Debt Costs

Meta Platforms is counting on Wall Street to pick up the tab for a artificial-intelligence spending spree. It picked a time when lenders' wallets are starting to feel light.

By Peter Rudegeair, Jack Pitcher and AnnaMaria Andriotis

A borrowing binge this year for big tech companies is giving debt investors fatigue and pushing up the cost of capital across the industry. Lenders on Monday demanded higher yields on bonds from a new data-center project in El Paso, Texas, leased by Meta compared with a similar project last year.

Concerns about more AI-adjacent debt coming, especially after an aggressive spending forecast from Alphabet's Google last week sparked a selloff in tech stocks and helped push down prices of bonds from companies like Microsoft and Amazon.com.

The supply of new bonds this year from AI companies reached \$270 billion in early July, almost double what was raised in all of 2025, according to Bank of America Global Research. Despite the investor in-

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- ◆ **Lawsuits pose threats to Meta's ambitions.**..... **B1**
- ◆ **Heard on the Street: Pricing in miracle on costs.**..... **B10**

Trump Turns Up Heat on RFK Jr. To Cut Back on Childhood Vaccines

By LIZ ESSLEY WHYTE

WASHINGTON—At a May lunch at the president's golf course in northern Virginia, President Trump asked Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., why he wasn't doing more to probe the alleged connection between vaccines and autism, according to people familiar with the matter. The health secretary had the yips, Trump told Kennedy, according to one of the people.

Kennedy was taken aback. Even though he has long been known to be skeptical of vaccinations, he had been asked by White House political advisers

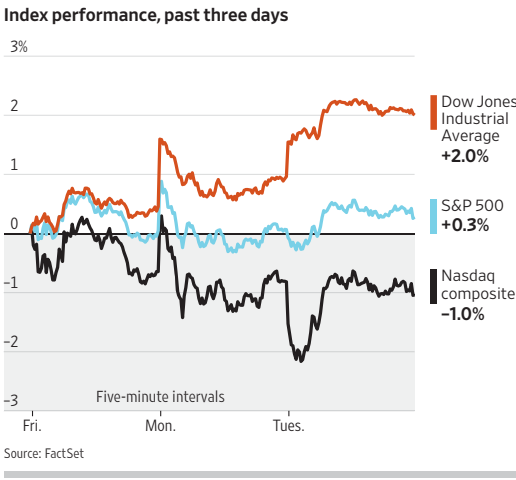
to tone down his vaccine efforts ahead of the midterms, the people said.

Now, it was the commander in chief who was pushing to make the study of vaccines and autism more of a priority. The president steers nearly every conversation with his health secretary back to the issue, some of the people said.

Chief among the president's desires: Do more to reduce the number of shots that federal guidelines recommend for children, according to people familiar with the matter. They said the president hopes to then see autism rates drop, even if any such effect could take years.

Earnings Lift the Blue Chips

Investors continued selling chip and memory stocks, sending the Nasdaq down 0.2% on Tuesday. Strong earnings lifted the Dow, which rose 1%, and the S&P 500 climbed 0.2%. **B10**



Britain Is a Mess. At Least There's 'Hot Podium Guy.'

Sound engineer is a rare symbol of political continuity—and good looks

By KATE LYNCH

LONDON—Britain's new prime minister arrived in Downing Street last week promising stability for a weary nation bewildered after churning through six leaders in seven years.

Andy Burnham's first move, however, threatened what many have come to see as the only reliable thing in British politics: "Hot Podium Guy."

Through years of extraordinary political upheaval, the sound engineer at No. 10 Downing Street has served as

a chiseled omen of great change. Tobias Gough's duty was simple: wheel out the heavy wooden lectern and test the mic whenever a premier was about to resign or make their first speech to the nation.

He became a rare symbol of institutional continuity: A regular bit-part character keeping calm and carrying on during a merry-go-round of political change. Over the years some fans have even suggested that Gough should

be the next prime minister. It doesn't hurt that the 42-year-old is, well, kind of hot.

"You don't see that many attractive people in British politics," said Melissa Tourt, co-founder of the court-transparency group Open Justice UK.

So when Burnham decided to break with tradition and make his inaugural address Monday accompanied by only a microphone stand, a vocal faction of the electorate worried they'd lose more than the lectern.

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Iran Launches Missile Attack On U.S. Forces

Surprise strike marks strategy shift for Tehran; projectiles are all intercepted

Iran launched a surprise ballistic-missile attack on American forces in Jordan, a U.S. official said, a violent escalation that piles new pressure on President Trump to renew the war in earnest.

By Michael Amon, Lara Seligman and Shelby Holliday

The missiles were all successfully intercepted, the U.S. military said. But the assault raised the prospect that American forces would have to respond, just as negotiations to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and eventually jumpstart broader peace talks were picking up speed.

The assault marked a shift for Iran, which until now had generally fired on U.S. forces in retaliation for American airstrikes on its own territory.

With the unprompted missile attack, Iran showed it is willing to take the fight to the U.S. on its own terms in an attempt to force Trump's hand.

Shortly after the Iranian strikes on Jordan, the U.S. military announced that U.S. and Saudi jet fighters had launched strikes in Iraq on Tuesday against Iran-backed groups that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had previously directed to attack American troops and Saudi energy infrastructure. Those attacks against U.S. forces weren't successful, U.S. Central Command said.

Hours before Iran's barrage, Trump said Tuesday the U.S. would restart strikes against Iran if a ceasefire deal couldn't be reached.

"They know I'm going to do that if they don't make a deal," he told "Fox & Friends" on Tuesday. "The bridges are

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- ◆ **Strains chill U.S. reception for Netanyahu.**..... **A6**
- ◆ **China evades hurdles to get Mideast oil.**..... **A7**

Underground Reactor Splits Rural Kansas

By KRIS MAHER AND JENNIFER HILLER

PARSONS, Kan.—Residents of this sleepy farming outpost agree on many things. But whether to put an experimental nuclear reactor a mile deep in the granite beneath their town isn't one of them.

Elected officials and some others see a chance to create jobs and lure data centers and manufacturers to a rural patch where the economy has been flatter than the surrounding cornfields. Another group is effectively saying "not under my backyard."

"I put \$125,000 into my house, and now a nuclear re-

actor is coming to town," said Jerel Johnson, an IT professional who planned to retire in Parsons. "I can't think of a worse idea."

No one has tried operating a commercial nuclear reactor deep underground—until now. The so-called Gravity Reactor is the creation of Liz Muller and her father, Richard Muller, emeritus professor of physics at the University of California, Berkeley, and an inventor. They founded Deep Fission, a three-year-old startup that has raised around \$150 million in the past year, including \$40 million last month through an initial pub-

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INSIDE



PERSONAL JOURNAL

An everyday guide for how to supersize your retirement account. **A10**



SPORTS

Closers are suddenly on the verge of extinction in Major League Baseball. **A16**

U.S. NEWS

Rare Uncertainty Marks This Fed Meeting

By Nick Timiraos

By the time the Federal Reserve meets, Wall Street usually already knows the outcome. Not this time.

Two weeks ago, the picture pointed toward the central bank extending its hold on rates. Remarks from senior officials who have often helped shape expectations had laid out what would push them to raise rates—and June’s cooler inflation readings came in below that bar, shifting the debate over a possible rate increase to September.

Then around last week, as the collapse of the U.S.-Iran ceasefire sent energy prices higher, market talk of a July increase began to feed on itself.

Suddenly, the September debate was live for July. On Tuesday, futures markets pointed to a one-in-three chance of a rate increase, while probabilities in prediction markets were slightly lower.

The case for a surprise increase rests less on anything members of the rate-setting committee have signaled than on whether Chairman Kevin Warsh supports one for reasons of his own.

Here are three things to watch:

The decision

A hold would be the conventional move. It is what the data pointed to after June’s soft in-

flation reading. It is what officials who usually signal the Fed’s thinking had steered markets toward. It is also, by most readings, where Warsh himself pointed in testimony two weeks ago, when he did nothing to prepare markets for a move.

If the Fed holds, watch for any dissents. A vote or two against a hold would highlight how pressure to move is building inside the committee.

If the Fed increases rates, it would represent a big change. It would mean overriding the officials who had signaled comfort with the Fed’s current stance, diminishing the value of anything they say next time. It would also have political repercussions. The White House

spent much of the last year insisting rates were too high and that inflation was under control. A rate increase by Trump’s own nominee would say the opposite and put to rest any notion that Warsh is doing the president’s bidding.

The strategy

An increase, above all, would lay down a marker. Warsh has cast himself as the chairman who ends five years of inflation above the Fed’s 2% target, and moving where his predecessors would have waited would prove it in a way no speech could.

This strategy also remains contested. An increase to prove something relies on logic that

New York Fed President John Williams, the vice chair of the rate-setting committee, rejected earlier this month. “The way you maintain the credibility that’s been built up over decades is by making the best decisions you can given the data,” he said, “rather than trying to use monetary policy to affect credibility.”

An increase would create a further puzzle: Warsh hasn’t explained how tighter policy would address the current pressures.

The explanation

Whatever the Fed does, watch how Warsh explains it. He has spent two months

vowing to restore price stability and declaring that the Fed is responsible for inflation. If the Fed holds steady, as most analysts expect, the question is why he passed on this chance to prove the vow was more than words—and what would it take to move him.

If the Fed increases rates, the reason Warsh gives could determine which direction markets go. Cast as a response to the Fed’s long miss on its inflation target, it would signal the first of several increases; some analysts expect long-term yields to fall on the view that the Fed finally means to bring inflation down. Cast instead as a one-off reaction, it carries less of a signal.

Reactor Splits Rural Kansas

Continued from Page One
lic offering, largely to fund the work in Parsons.

Parsons, population 9,600, sits about midway between Kansas City and Tulsa, Okla. Deep Fission drilled a first test hole this spring on 100 acres at a mostly overgrown industrial park dotted with old munitions bunkers just outside town.

On a recent day, Maurice LaFountain, Deep Fission’s senior engineering director, showed off pink-flecked granite retrieved from the company’s first test hole and joked that the billion-year-old rock would make a nice countertop.

An empty steel canister sat on a cleared drill pad, waiting to go down a second hole this year. The plan is to send another one loaded with nuclear fuel into a third hole to heat water a mile underground and generate electricity on the surface in 2027 or 2028—an astonishingly short time frame by industry standards.

Verlyn Bolinger, an insurance agent who sits on the Parsons city commission, is now mostly excited by that prospect. “Any time you’re putting a nuclear reactor in a hole, it’s kind of scary,” he said in his office, surrounded by Kansas City Royals memorabilia. “It’s great that it’s here. It’s kind of bad that we’re the guinea pigs.”

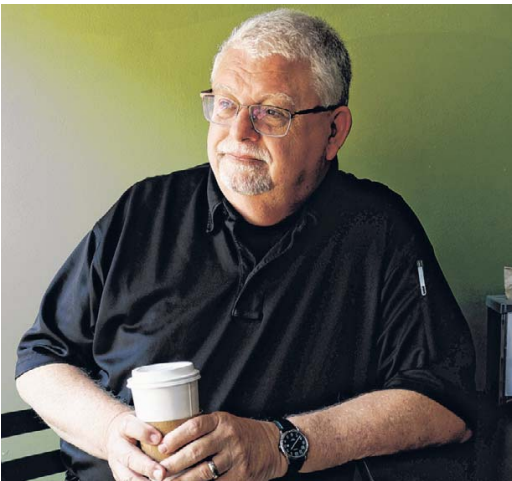
The project is riding momentum from the Trump administration’s efforts to usher in a “nuclear renaissance” by streamlining regulations and offering the industry billions of dollars in loans and fuel supply-chain investments. Executive orders President Trump signed last year aim to quadruple America’s nuclear-power generation by 2050—a steep climb given that construction in the industry has slowed to a crawl for the last three decades; nuclear generates about a fifth of U.S. electricity.

The renewed interest comes amid soaring electricity demand, much of it driven by data centers for artificial intelligence.

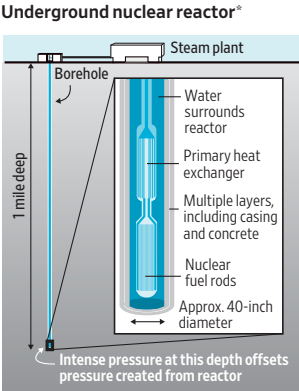
Deep Fission’s project is one of 11 in an Energy Department pilot program designed to build and test small, advanced reactors to pave the way for commercial use. Participating companies can construct reactors outside a traditional national laboratory setting and use expedited procedures for environmental reviews.

“It’s allowing us to develop a first reactor within a time frame that had been unthinkable previously,” said Liz Muller, Deep Fission’s chief executive.

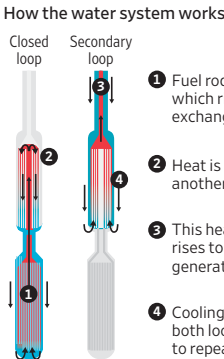
Four startups, including one from a separate Energy Department program, say they have achieved criticality, or



Clockwise from left, patches against an underground nuclear reactor in Parsons, Kan.; the location where an underground reactor would go; Robert Spinks, the police chief in Parsons; and the test nuclear reactor.



*Not to scale
Source: Deep Fission



Deep Fission’s nuclear reactor is under construction in the Great Plains Industrial Park.



BRIAN MCGILL/WSJ

self-sustaining nuclear reactions, with their reactor designs. Deep Fission’s is using a common, scaled-down, reactor design; its innovation is putting it underground.

The key to the plan is avoiding the need for hulking containment buildings. Instead, the mile-deep hole will provide the necessary pressure, cooling and containment. A single reactor will generate just 15 megawatts, enough to power about 12,000 homes, but Muller envisions an array of 100 or more, providing more than a gigawatt, enough for a data center. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission would oversee approval of commer-

cial licensing, needed to sell electricity.

Dozens of firms are designing smaller reactors, and a handful have begun construction, but none yet operate commercially in the U.S. Companies like Deep Fission must prove they can meet short timelines, contain costs and overcome the industry’s historic challenges.

Nuclear watchdogs say the administration is moving too fast and cutting corners. This spring, 12 attorneys general argued that circumventing standard environmental reviews would put communities at risk, among other things.

“It’s simply unacceptable to

even consider exempting Deep Fission from a peer-reviewed environmental impact statement on the generation of high-level nuclear waste under Parsons,” said Paul Gunter with Beyond Nuclear, a group that opposes nuclear power and weapons.

The Energy Department said the administration is focused on safety and security.

Liz Muller said Deep Fission’s plan to store spent fuel underground is safe. Eventually Deep Fission could seal it in place or move it to another site. She and her father previously founded Deep Isolation, which designs underground disposal of nuclear waste.

Deep Fission plans to open a Parsons office where locals can ask questions, she said. The project “needs to be done in partnership with the community and sort of their own vision for their economic development.”

When Deep Fission broke ground in December, some residents were shaken. The Great Plains Industrial Park, a decommissioned Army ammunition base, had approved the project without public discussion.

Marjorie Reynolds, a pediatric nurse, quickly formed a

nonprofit, the Prairie Dog Alliance, to oppose the project. Reynolds worries about environmental oversight and potential risks to water. She questions how the company will perform maintenance underground, and why drillers are operating under oil-and-gas regulations, not nuclear ones. If Deep Fission were to go out of business, what then?

“This is a nuclear experiment,” said the seventh-generation Kansan.

Muller said Deep Fission’s reactor is too deep to affect aquifers, and that it will follow all nuclear and oil-and-gas regulations. Its reactors are expected to last six to seven years, she added, so the likelihood of needing maintenance is low. “There’s not a lot of moving parts that require maintenance. We have simplified our reactor quite extensively.”

Robert Spinks, Parsons’s police chief, said he isn’t worried about potential contamination and thinks the reactor could be the spark the city needs when energy is a big draw.

“It’s a proven technology, just in a new application,” he said. “And if that is a trigger which draws in other manufacturing and brings in living-wage jobs, I think that’s a win.”

Home-Price Growth Picks Up, Survey Says

U.S. home price growth rose in May as trends differed throughout regions. The S&P Cotality Case-Shiller National Home Price Index rose 1.1% in the 12 months through May.

For the 12th consecutive month, U.S. home values fell in real terms, as May’s 4.2% inflation ran roughly three percentage points above the price gain, the survey said.

“May’s data suggests that U.S. home prices continue to decline in real terms,” said Rebecca Kaufman, associate director of commodities at S&P Dow Jones Indices.

While major metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest recorded year-over-year gains exceeding the national average, many in the West and Sunbelt remain under pressure, Kaufman added.

Chicago led all metros with a 6.9% annual increase in May, followed by New York and Cleveland. Las Vegas posted the largest decline, falling 1.9% year over year, with Seattle, Denver and Tampa, Fla., also registering losses.

—Jessica Coacci

U.S. Consumers Are Feeling Less Confident

Consumer confidence declined in July as consumers’ assessment of current business and labor-market conditions softened for a third straight month, a survey from The Conference Board said.

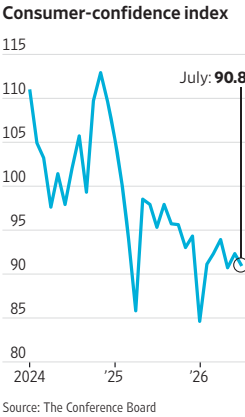
The research group said Tuesday its consumer confidence index fell to 90.8 in July from an upwardly revised 92.2 in June.

Consumers’ assessment of current business and labor-market conditions fell by 3.6 points to 114.9. Meanwhile, the expectations index, based on short-term outlook for income, business and labor market conditions, remained unchanged at 74.7.

The Conference Board said perceptions of employment conditions declined, with the labor market differential—the share of consumers saying jobs are “plentiful” minus the share saying jobs are “hard to get”—ticking down to 3.1%. Economists watch this labor-market differential to gauge how tight labor conditions are for households.

A separate reading of sentiment from the University of Michigan this month reported consumer sentiment improved as gasoline prices cooled. However, some economists have noted re-escalation of fighting in the Middle East could stall that momentum in the weeks ahead if gasoline prices climb again.

—Jessica Coacci



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CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

Federal Reserve Chairman
Kevin Warsh on June 15 held a dinner with some central-bank colleagues. In some editions Tuesday, a Page One article about the new Fed chairman incorrectly said June 16.

Readers can alert The Wall Street Journal to any errors in news articles by emailing wsjcontact@wsj.com or by calling 888-762-5450.

U.S. NEWS

Medicare Drug Plan Subsidy Will End

By ANNA WILDE MATHEWS

The Trump administration plans to end a subsidy program that has helped hold down premiums for Medicare drug plans, a move that could leave many seniors facing higher rates for their prescription coverage next year.

The move will eliminate a program that is giving insurance companies an estimated \$3.6 billion in subsidies this year to blunt increases in premiums for the Medicare prescription plans, known as Part D. The program will end after 2026, according to administration officials.

High drug costs are a perennial issue—especially for seniors on fixed incomes—and healthcare affordability is expected to be a focus in the midterm elections. Roughly 25 million people have Part D plans, and they will learn about their 2027 rates in the fall.

A Trump administration official said the extra subsidies encouraged insurers to raise rates, knowing the government would pick up the extra cost. He said the subsidies weren't needed, and other policies that help hold down Part D costs also remain in place.

“We are stabilizing the market so this bailout is no longer needed,” said Mehmet Oz, the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, in a posting on social media.

The Trump administration official said that if the program had remained in effect next year, more than half of the subsidy money would have flowed to one company, **UnitedHealth Group**. A UnitedHealth spokesman said the company is “committed to working with CMS, ensuring seniors have access to affordable prescription medicines.”

The average premium for a Part D plan was around \$36 a month this year, according to KFF, a health-policy nonprofit.

The administration official said around 25% of Medicare Part D plan enrollees would see premiums for their plans stay flat or go down next year. Around 30% will have an increase of less than \$10 to their monthly bill.

For the remaining 45%, he said, the increases are largely in the \$11 to \$20 range a month.

Seniors should be able to find lower premiums if they switch plans, he said, adding affordable options are still available.

Medicare drug coverage premiums are rising because the plans have been hit by growing expenses for GLP-1 medications and other specialty drugs. Changes implemented under 2022's Inflation Reduction Act also have pushed up premiums. The law reduced many Medicare enrollees' out-of-pocket expenses but required insurers to shoulder more of the costs.

Those pressures are expected to continue in 2027, said Juliette Cubanski, a vice president at KFF.

The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, a federal watchdog agency, estimates the subsidy program, which was supposed to stabilize Part D, reduced the average Part D plan premium by about 40% in 2025. This year, it cut the average rate by an estimated 27%.

Tax List Is Warning Shot at NYC Elite

City discloses names of property owners who might have to pay pied-à-terre levy

A cabinet secretary, President Trump's niece and an Oscar-nominated director are among the potential targets of Mayor Zohran Mamdani's tax on luxury second homes.

By James Fanelli, Rebecca Picciotto and Greta Reich

Mamdani's administration fired a warning shot last week when it published an online list of property owners who may be subject to the surcharge on luxury second homes. The list includes owners' names, addresses and market value of properties.

The release of the list threatens to stir up existing tensions between the mayor and the city's elite. The city has also begun sending out notifications to homeowners that they might be subject to the new tax. “If you have a second home in New York City worth

more than \$5M, check your mailbox when you're back in the five boroughs—because you've got mail,” the mayor said in a post on social media.

Steven Fulop, president and chief executive of Partnership for New York City, a prominent business group, said the list seemed like a tool to target and shame certain individuals.

“Publishing a list of individual taxpayers' names alongside a policy designed to raise revenue from them sends an implicit message that these are people who've done something wrong, rather than simply people the city has chosen to tax more,” Fulop said. “The mayor has already won the election—he doesn't need to govern by singling people out to make a political point.”

The new surcharge, which went into effect July 1, targets second homes worth \$5 million or more. It can easily add tens of thousands of dollars to some homeowners' city tax bills.

A Finance Department spokesman said the list was released as per state law and will be used to identify owners subject to the tax. It includes the type of information that

real estate lawyers say has long been publicly available.

The list includes a \$37 million property of which Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick is the trustee. A property owned by Trump's niece, Mary Trump, is listed as being potentially subject to the tax. Also listed are more than a dozen units at Trump Park Avenue, a luxury condo building where Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, and the president's former lawyer, Michael Cohen, have lived.

The list also includes a nearly \$76 million townhouse on Manhattan's Upper East Side owned by the ex-wife of billionaire financier John Paulson and a property owned by filmmaker Darren Aronofsky.

None of these named individuals could be reached for comment.

The newly released list is preliminary and encompasses roughly 960,000 properties out of a total of about 3.7 million units in the city. That is far more than officials expect will ultimately be subject to the pied-à-terre surcharge. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul's office previously estimated the tax

would apply to roughly 10,000 second homes.

The state Legislature approved the pied-à-terre tax earlier this year at the urging of Mamdani, a Democratic socialist who won office campaigning on an ambitious affordability agenda that he wants to fund through increased taxes on the wealthy. As mayor, he pushed state lawmakers to raise billions of dollars by raising tax rates on high-income earners and major corporations. Hochul balked at those taxes but backed the pied-à-terre tax, which her office estimates will raise at least \$500 million a year in revenue for the city.

In May, Mamdani celebrated the planned pied-à-terre tax with a social media video set outside of Ken Griffin's penthouse on Central Park South, one of the luxury properties that he said would be subject to the levy.

“This pied a terre tax is specifically designed for the richest of the rich,” he said in the video. Under the new surcharge, Griffin could end up owing \$1 million a year, on top of the \$837,000 in prop-

erty tax he pays now.

The Finance Department is expected to pare down and fine-tune the list. The city intends to notify individual homeowners of their pied-à-terre tax bills by Aug. 30 and homeowners can appeal the decision. The list is scheduled to be finalized in December.

The city typically publishes an annual tax roll of all property owners, and real-estate attorneys say the information included is par for the course.

“It's not doxxing because it's all the same information that's on the regular roll,” said Adrian Diaz, a property tax attorney at Hogan Lovells Cadwalader.

Diaz noted that the mere size of the list is enough to alarm homeowners who might find their names, despite not ultimately being subject to the tax. He has been fielding calls from his own worried clients since the list was released.

“A shorter list, something more targeted would have been more appropriate,” he said.

◆ Many rent-stabilized units go to wealthy tenants.... B1



FROM TOP: SEAN BOICE/ZUMA PRESS, OCTAVIO JONES/AP/GETTY IMAGES (2)

Tornado Devastates Wisconsin Communities

First responders searched damaged homes and buildings Tuesday for possible victims of a tornado that tore through several northeastern Wisconsin communities.

The twister touched down in the Fox Cities region, which includes Appleton, Menasha and Neenah, at around 1 p.m. Monday and remained on the ground for more than 20 minutes as it cut a roughly 12-mile path of destruction through an area, the National Weather Service reported. It was nearly a mile across at its widest, and it destroyed homes and businesses, flipped cars and knocked down rows of power lines in the region, which is roughly 100 miles northwest of Milwaukee.

The timing—it blew in when most people were awake and after warnings had been issued—could be why there have been no reported deaths, authorities said.

“I think what helped us was it was during the week,” Menasha Police Chief Matt Albrecht said at a news conference Tuesday. “Everybody

was at work. It was the middle of the day. Most people were not at home and at their place of employment.”

Authorities said a number of people were injured and treated at hospitals, but they didn't know exactly how many or how seriously.

“The depth of the tornado and its impact is incredible, devastating. We're really still at the assessment stage,” Winnebago County Executive Gordon Hintz told reporters.

Gov. Tony Evers declared a state of emergency for the affected areas.

As chain saws roared in the background, Appleton Mayor Jake Woodford said a number of neighborhoods were “truly devastated.” Like elsewhere in the region, electricity lines were tangled around broken trees, making power restoration a slow, risky process.

The twister was spun off by a large storm system that moved through the Great Lakes, fueled by a buildup of heat and humidity, the weather service said.

—Associated Press



Proposal Lets Space Firms Skip Environmental Reviews

By MICAH MAIDENBERG

The Trump administration is proposing a way for space companies to skip environmental reviews.

Transportation officials on Tuesday disclosed a plan that would allow the Federal Aviation Administration to waive requirements under environmental laws and regulations as it permits commercial rocket sites, launches and spacecraft re-entries.

The agency rolled out the proposal as it prepares for a surge in launches and other

space activities in the years ahead. Members of the public and companies will provide comments on the idea, ahead of the changes potentially taking effect.

Launches and reentries of spacecraft can generate a lot of noise, alter wildlife habitats and have other impacts on the surrounding landscapes. The FAA, which manages environmental analyses as part of its work overseeing some space activities, assesses the effects and discusses alternatives when carrying them out.

Environmental advocates

and many communities view the law—and the analysis it requires—as an essential way to understand major developments. Yet the reviews can take more than a year, frustrating companies and executives who say the efforts slow their projects down.

The FAA expects 214 launches or spacecraft reentries during the current government fiscal year, a number expected to jump to more than 500 in a decade.

That increase is anticipated to be driven by companies such as SpaceX and Rocket

Lab, as well as Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and startups including Stoke Space. Those companies and others are looking to deploy scores of satellites for communications, military purposes and potentially even artificial-intelligence computing.

“We are supercharging commercial space activity, slashing costs, and strengthening America's competitive edge in this vital field,” Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said.

Among the reviews that have triggered criticism from both companies and residents

is the FAA's environmental analysis of SpaceX's Starbase development outside Brownsville, Texas.

Some residents in the area have assailed the FAA for not conducting thorough enough reviews, while the Elon Musk-led company has in the past criticized the FAA for what it has called “superfluous environmental analysis” related to a launch from Starbase. It has said the company is committed to mitigating environmental effects at its facilities.

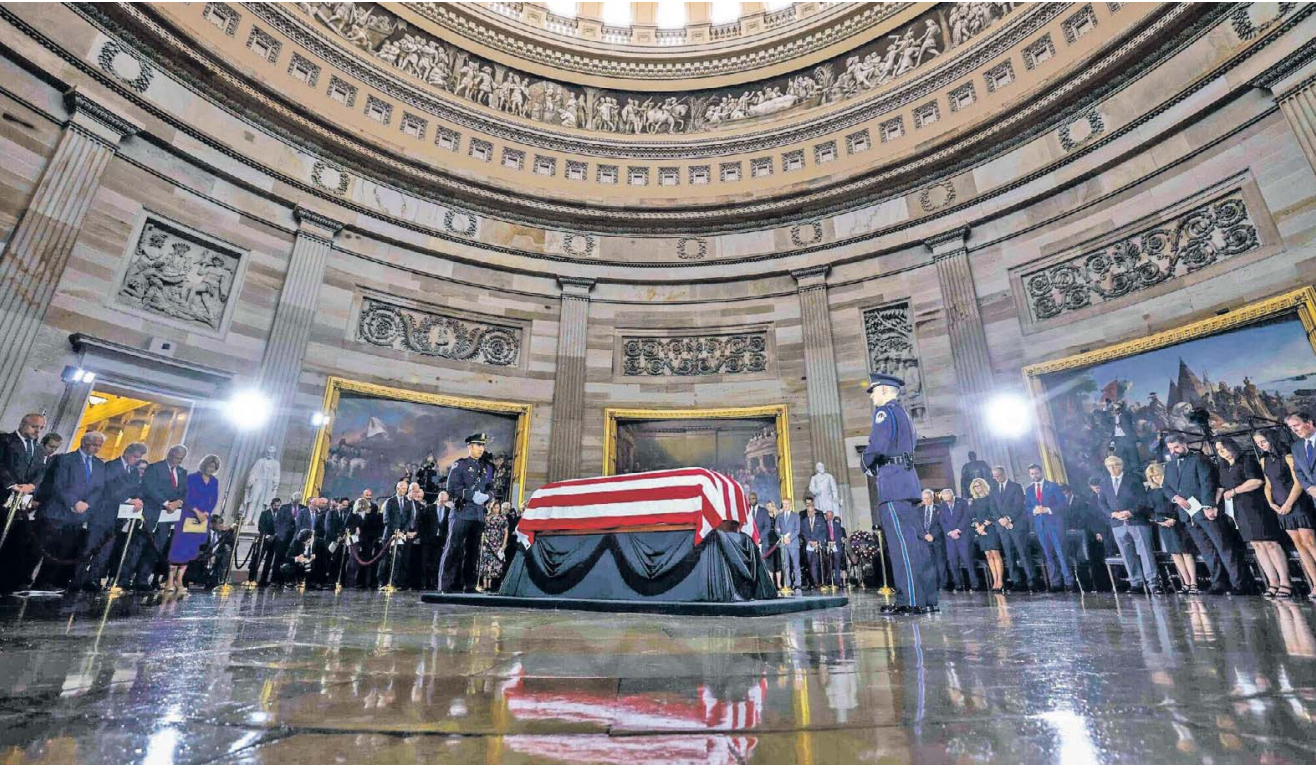
Letting the space industry move faster by cutting down

on environmental analysis could put pressure on other parts of the FAA, namely its air-traffic control arm. The FAA works closely with launchers to carve out airspace for launches, keeping commercial air traffic out of areas where rockets are ascending.

Most U.S. launches occur from the Cape Canaveral area along Florida's east coast, flying near busy routes for flights to and from the state.

Blue Origin, Stoke Space and United Launch Alliance all plan more launches from that region, as does SpaceX.

U.S. NEWS



The casket of Sen. Lindsey Graham during a ceremony in the U.S. Capitol rotunda on Tuesday. Republicans and Democrats alike paid their respects.

Capital Pays Last Respects to Graham

Political leaders from Washington and the world bid farewell to senator

WASHINGTON—President Trump called the late Sen. Lindsey Graham “a respected statesman, giant of the U.S. Senate and true American original” in a speech eulogizing the influential lawmaker at a funeral at the Washington National Cathedral on Tuesday afternoon.

By Maya Davis, Siobhan Hughes and Richard Rubin

“For more than 30 years, nothing of consequence happened in this capital without Lindsey Graham knowing about it. No bill became law without Lindsey Graham having a say in it,” said Trump. “He was a man who gave America the full measure of his good and mighty heart until that heart itself just gave out.” “There was truly nobody like Lindsey Graham,” Trump said. Graham, a South Carolina Republican who was a top adviser to Trump on foreign affairs, is being laid to rest this week. The observances began with a solemn ceremony attended by congressional colleagues and Vice President JD Vance in the Capitol Rotunda,

followed by a service at the cathedral later in the afternoon. He will be buried in South Carolina on Wednesday. Attendees at the cathedral included cabinet members such as Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, and top Trump aides Susie Wiles and Stephen Miller. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, whom Graham fiercely defended during his confirmation hearing, had a third-row seat. Before the service began, the crowd was transfixed by the sight of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Sen. Tim Scott (R., S.C.) and former Rep. Trey Gowdy (R., S.C.) sat together, in a row that included Sens. Dick Durbin (D., Ill.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.), some of the dozens of lawmakers who squeezed into the pews. Pennsylvania Sens. John Fetterman, a Democrat, and Dave McCormick, a Republican, walked in together.

Onetime Trump rival

While Democrats have heavily criticized Graham and Trump over the Iran war, many had been partners with Graham over the years—traveling on foreign trips with him,

or, in the case of Durbin, attempting to strike deals on immigration policy. During his speech, Trump also acknowledged that he and Graham had once been political rivals in the 2016 presidential race. “Lindsey and I did not exactly get off to the best of starts running against each other,” Trump said. He then recalled a stunt in which he gave out Graham’s personal cellphone number during a 2015 campaign appearance. The president proceeded to read the number again Tuesday, to laughter in the cathedral. “If anybody wants to give it a shot!” the president said. Trump also reiterated his support for Sen. Darline Graham, whom the president endorsed to serve out the late senator’s term and then urged to run for a full six-year term. Darline Graham was seated in the front row. “I have no doubt that he’s looking down today beaming with pride that his sister’s a senator,” Trump said. Fox News host Sean Hannity followed Trump with his own remarks praising Graham and referenced Graham’s efforts to push Trump to confront Iran while calling for the U.S. and allies to finish the job. “Lindsey had moral clarity,” Hannity said. “There can be no path to peace until evil is defeated.” Netanyahu nodded as Han-

nity said that Trump and Graham were Israel’s greatest friends. Rev. Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, antiabortion leader Marjorie Jones Dannenfelser, and Trump ally Rev. William Franklin Graham III read Scripture. Earlier in the day, members of the Air Force, in a nod to the senator’s 33 years of military service, carried Graham’s casket, draped with an American flag, into the Capitol Rotunda. Vance and Graham’s Senate colleagues from both parties were arrayed around the casket at the Capitol, with party leaders including John Thune (R., S.D.) and Schumer seated in front. Former senators, including Rob Portman (R., Ohio) and Lamar Alexander (R., Tenn.), attended. Fetterman, known for his hoodies, wore a suit. Thune remembered his friendship with Graham and nodded to the senator’s record of working with members of both parties. “Republicans and Democrats alike, including the Democrat leaders, are here to say farewell,” Thune said. “It’s hard to think that there will be no more Senate dinners, that Lindsey won’t be dropping by my office to discuss some piece of legislation or make me laugh with his witty commentary.”

Vance reminisced about getting to know Graham during the vice president’s 2022 Senate campaign, joking that he couldn’t repeat what Graham told him on the trail but that he laughed until his stomach hurt. “It was impossible not to like him. That swash-buckling infectious laugh that happened as a human being and, of course, as a U.S. senator,” Vance said.

South Carolina next

Graham’s body will be flown home to South Carolina, where ceremonies conclude Wednesday with an F-16 flyover, a public service and a private family burial. The senator died July 11 at age 71 from an aortic tear, just days after returning from Ukraine as part of his work to push a Russia sanctions bill. Graham played an integral role in American foreign relations, positioning himself as Trump’s right-hand man on Russia and the Middle East. He frequently visited troops overseas, championed aid to Ukraine and took hard-line positions on Iran. The funeral attendees reflected on his position as a Trump ally, defense advocate and hawkish foreign-policy figure. Netanyahu and Zelensky flew to the U.S. to attend the event and meet with Trump.

New Senator Will Face a Competitive Primary

WASHINGTON—In the span of a week, Sen. Darline Graham was sworn into office, co-sponsored her first piece of legislation and made a big political decision—all before she buried her brother, the late Sen. Lindsey Graham. By Ken Thomas, Maya Davis and Marianne LeVine Darline Graham, who in recent years had run South Carolina’s Commission for the Blind, is getting a crash course in Hill politics, an experience colleagues described as drinking from a fire hose. Appointed to serve out the final months of her brother’s term, she then decided to run for a full six-year term. She faces a competitive Republican primary next month, after President Trump’s endorsement failed to scare away GOP opponents. “I’m just going to be honest. I wasn’t sure if I was going to be able to get up here. I will be brief because it has been a very difficult week,” the 62-year-old said at a South Carolina Prayer Breakfast in which she nodded to her brother’s record. “I am going to work as hard as I can to carry on his legacy and to help the people of South Carolina and to work for this country.” Lindsey Graham, who died July 11 at the age of 71, was memorialized Tuesday at Washington’s National Cathedral following a ceremony inside the Rotunda of the Capitol. He will be laid to rest Wednesday in South Carolina.

Trump decided to back Darline Graham in the GOP primary. That hasn’t dissuaded others, and early polling indicates a competitive contest. Reps. Ralph Norman and Russell Fry announced plans to challenge her for the seat, along with ex-Gov. Mark Sanford, a former congressman, creating an awkward dynamic. Graham’s campaign expects to benefit from leftover funds in her brother’s campaign account, routed through the National Republican Senatorial Committee, according to a person familiar with the fund. The candidates will debate Aug. 3, a much-anticipated chance for voters to hear where Graham stands on key issues. The special GOP Senate primary is Aug. 11—and if no one receives a majority of the vote, the top-two finishers will compete in an Aug. 25 runoff. Inside the Senate, Graham has exchanged cellphone numbers with colleagues, and Republicans from leadership on down have offered their help. She has frequently been shepherded by Sen. Katie Britt (R., Ala.) and has been spotted with members of her family near the basement subways that connect the Capitol to Senate office buildings. “I said, ‘You know, we women have to stick together,’” said Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R., W.Va.), who introduced herself after Graham was sworn in. “She liked that.” Sen. Cynthia Lummis (R., Wyo.), said Graham received a standing ovation when she



Darline Graham has received Trump’s primary endorsement.

joined a regular GOP caucus meeting for the first time. Lummis recalled that she was already a veteran of Congress when her husband, Al, died suddenly of a heart attack in 2014. Of Graham, she said, “I can’t imagine how it would be to deal with the shocking death of your brother and then come here and try to learn the ways of the Senate at the same time. It’s a lot to ask of a person.” In her opening days as senator, Graham endorsed bills aligned with Trump. Her first

move was to co-sponsor the SAVE America Act, an election-related proposal that is a priority for the president. Graham then backed a slate of immigration-enforcement measures, antiabortion and gun-rights bills, and the Protecting American Taxpayers Act targeting government-assistance fraud. She was also the sponsor on a Russian sanctions bill, one of Lindsey Graham’s biggest causes. But the newest senator has indicated she won’t be a carbon copy of her brother’s poli-

tics. She has declined interviews, after a sit-down with Fox News’ Sean Hannity in which she announced she would run for the full term. In the interview, she said she would rib her brother about his focus on national security. She said she told him: “Talk about about what matters to the average person. You know, the price of groceries, the price of gas, healthcare, insurance, those kind of things.” She also said she told Trump that she would be loyal to him. Rep. William Timmons (R., S.C.), who has endorsed Graham and said he speaks with her often, said he anticipates a shift in emphasis. “I think she’s probably going to be more focused on domestic policy, the issue of affordability,” he said. Sens. Rick Scott (R., Fla.) and Mike Lee (R., Utah) and Rep. Nancy Mace (R., S.C.) endorsed Norman, a member of the House Freedom Caucus. Mace sent Graham flowers after her brother’s death and said she admires her for serving out her brother’s term. But she endorsed Norman because she wants a conservative to secure the seat and doesn’t know what Graham stands for. “It’s going to be hard to attack because she doesn’t have a record. And she will have just buried her brother five days earlier,” Mace said. “...The nepotism is the No. 1 issue. This is not a coronation.” Democrats have nominated Dr. Annie Andrews, a pediatrician and gun-violence prevention advocate, in the fall general election.

Senate Confirms Clayton for Intel Post

By Yoko Kubota

WASHINGTON—The Senate confirmed Jay Clayton as the director of national intelligence on Tuesday, placing the top federal prosecutor to helm an agency that underwent rounds of staff cuts in recent weeks. Clayton, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and a former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, was confirmed by a vote of 51 to 47, along party lines. Clayton takes over as the head of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which oversees 18 federal intelligence agencies and units. The size of ODNI has shrunk in recent weeks after President Trump named Bill Pulte as acting director and instructed him to cut staff. Pulte said Tuesday that he has conducted five rounds of layoffs, bringing down the staff number by around 30% from several weeks ago. Many staff members have returned to the agencies they were originally sent in from, said Sen. James Lankford (R., Okla.), a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee. Some lawmakers have expressed concerns that the shrinking could go too far. In Clayton’s confirmation hearing before the committee earlier this month, Sen. Susan Collins (R., Maine) said: “I am deeply disturbed that some administration officials, and indeed some senators, have called for not just a reduction in the size of ODNI, but that we abolish it altogether.”



Jay Clayton

Clayton responded by saying he is committed to maintaining ODNI’s vital work. He also said he sees the role of ODNI as similar to that of a board of directors, focused on oversight, but not operations. “To the extent that the ODNI has gotten into operations or started to play the roles of some of those other agencies, it probably should pull back,” he said. Once Clayton takes over, he will need to work with Capitol Hill to have Congress reauthorize Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, a critical federal spying tool that expired in June. Trump insisted that neither Clayton’s confirmation nor the renewal of FISA should proceed until Congress passed a GOP voter-ID bill. Clayton has a long legal career but doesn’t have a traditional intelligence experience as many of his predecessors had as spy chief. Still, many on Capitol Hill saw Clayton as a less contentious choice than Pulte, who also heads the Federal Housing Finance Agency. Pulte gained favor with Trump through his aggressive approach to his position as the administration’s housing chief by alleging that several of Trump’s perceived foes committed mortgage fraud. In the July confirmation hearing, Clayton was asked multiple times if Joe Biden won the 2020 election. He avoided saying that Biden defeated Trump. Mark Warner, the highest ranking Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he was concerned about Clayton’s ability to speak up. “I came away from his confirmation process with serious reservations about whether he would be willing to stand up to political pressure when it matters most,” he said in a statement Tuesday. “Now that he has been confirmed, I sincerely hope he proves those concerns unfounded, because the Intelligence Community deserves steadier leadership than it has received in recent months.”

U.S. NEWS

Wisconsin Democratic Socialist Leads Primary, Worries Old Guard

By JOHN MCCORMICK

MADISON, Wis.—Francesca Hong, a dues-paying member of the Democratic Socialists of America, has establishment Democrats rattled ahead of an Aug. 11 primary for governor.

Hong, a 37-year-old state representative and part-time bartender, leads in the most recent Marquette Law School primary poll. She is outpacing a former lieutenant governor, a former top state administrator and several other more-prominent Democrats.

The race is one of three heartland Democratic primaries in early August offering insights into the party's direction. The other two are U.S. Senate contests in Michigan and Minnesota.

Hong's bid will also test whether Democratic socialists, a rising faction within the party that has won in deeply blue cities and districts, can win statewide primaries in purple states.

The primaries are playing out as Democrats remain divided about how to more widely win competitive elections.

One wing asserts battleground districts and states are won by wooing independent voters with moderation, while another says voters are eager for significant change at a time of widespread skepticism in government and widening economic disparity.

Hong, Wisconsin's first Asian-American state legislator, is solidly on the side calling for a vast expansion of government into virtually every corner of life, from free child care and mass transit to publicly run grocery stores and the elimination of all college debt.

She backs legalizing marijuana to fund high-speed broadband and supports a state-run development bank, Medicare-for-all, a 32-hour workweek with no pay cut,



Francesca Hong, a state legislator and part-time bartender, dismisses concerns about her electability in the governor's race.

abolishing the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, restoring voting rights to felons and the eventual elimination—or at least reduction—of prisons and police.

President Trump and other Republicans have branded the DSA as “communism” and are using the policy positions of its members as a line of attack against all Democrats.

Asked how she would pay for the additional benefits she is suggesting, Hong said she would push for higher taxes on the wealthiest and the elimination of business tax credits.

“The money is there,” she said in an interview. “It’s how we’ve allocated it and also who is not required to pay.”

Hong represents one of Wisconsin's most liberal legislative districts in Madison.

She was elected for the first time in 2020, the same year she became a DSA member.

The rare open-seat race for governor in Wisconsin comes after Democratic Gov. Tony Evers decided not to seek a third term.

The primary's winner will likely face Republican Tom Tiffany, a congressman since 2020 from northern Wisconsin. Establishment Democrats are deeply concerned that if Hong wins, her far-left views could cost the party a winnable governorship in November.

“The Democrats have moved left in primaries and the Republicans have moved right,” said Joe Wineke, a former Democratic Party of Wisconsin chairman. “She is the ultimate far-left candidate. It might work in a primary, but it’s not

going to work very well in a general.”

David Axelrod, a Democratic commentator who worked as a top strategist on Barack Obama's presidential campaigns, put it this way on social media late last week: “The Dem race for governor in WI feels like a slow-rolling car headed for a cliff.”

Hong dismissed concerns about her electability, pointing to an antiestablishment mood and what she said is her ability to attract a spectrum of voters drawn to her push to make life more affordable.

“I think that my multiple identities is what helps me connect with a lot of different types of people,” Hong said, before describing herself as “the only wage worker” in the race, the daughter of South Korean immigrants, a single mother and a renter. She said she still periodically picks up bartending shifts.

Hong has led a crowded field of candidates for much of the year, although with a large proportion of the likely Democratic primary electorate still undecided. A series of unusual turns in recent weeks has left the race even more uncertain.

One top contender, Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez, ended her candidacy July 17 after mismanagement of her campaign finances. Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley dropped out July 8 and endorsed Rodriguez, before jumping back in July 18 with the sudden endorsement of Evers.

In the interview, Hong declined to distance herself from 2020 and 2021 online posts where she advocated for defunding and abolishing the police. She said decisions about police staffing levels are made at the local level, but they are “more challenging because the state has not actually invested in services, in treatment, in healing, in victim services.”



Auctioneer Jonathan Klunk with the personal items of KFC's Colonel Sanders that were set for sale Tuesday.

GEORGIA

School Shooter Gets Life Without Parole

KENTUCKY

Colonel Sanders's Items Go to Auction

The teenager who committed a deadly mass shooting in September 2024 at Apalachee High School in Winder, Ga., was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Colt Gray, now 16 years old, was sentenced Tuesday, days after pleading guilty to killing two students and two teachers and injuring nine others. The two students killed were both 14 years old.

Barrow County Superior Court Judge Nicholas Primm said sentencing juveniles to life imprisonment without parole was unusual because of their youth. But Primm said he found Gray calculated and unrepentant. “Planning, fantasizing about, visualizing and executing a school shooting puts you in a problematic place, it puts you in an unredeemable moral wasteland,” Primm said to Gray during the sentencing. “You do not seem to be tormented by what you did.”

Colt Gray's father, Colin Gray, was convicted of second-degree murder and involuntary manslaughter in March for his role in making firearms available to his son.

—Jack Morphet

KFC founder Colonel Sanders's pressure cooker, black bow tie and dozens of other personal items were up for public auction Tuesday night, along with his former home and a dinner house Sanders opened after selling his restaurant chain.

Harland Sanders, still known as the face of the worldwide chain originally known as Kentucky Fried Chicken, established the Shelbyville, Ky., property as the first headquarters of his restaurant business in the late 1950s. He sold the property, which included his home and the Claudia Sanders Dinner House, to Tommy and Cherry Settle in 1974, who have run the restaurant since then.

One of the most intriguing pieces could be a personal 1964 planner with a handwritten herbs and spices recipe that was the subject of an early 2000s lawsuit filed by KFC Corp. to keep the contents private. KFC later dropped the legal action, saying after reviewing the planner that the ingredients didn't match Sanders's secret blend of 11 herbs and spices and was likely for a stuffing recipe.

—Associated Press

Debt Costs Hit Meta's AI Binge

Continued from Page One

digestion, the data-center boom looks poised to create even more new debt, even if it ends up being more expensive, because no player wants to risk falling behind in the AI race.

Meta executives have told bankers and fund managers that it will need to raise hundreds of billions of dollars to support its AI build-out and is in talks with other firms like Blackstone for additional funds, people familiar with the matter said. Meanwhile, Nvidia is in talks with OpenAI to provide a \$250 billion backstop to help finance the construction of a data-center project in Ohio, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday.

“The market is expecting the build to continue,” said Neha Khoda, head of U.S. credit strategy at Bank of America. “Just at a higher price point.”

Take Monday's sale of \$12.55 billion in notes tied to Meta's El Paso project, which is 80% owned by funds managed by BlackRock. Yields on the offering from Sopaipilla Investor, a holding company that owns BlackRock's portion of the project, were about 2.875 percentage points above the 10-year Treasury note, or 7.5%, people familiar with the offering said. Morgan Stanley and JPMorgan bankers led the deal, which was for bonds that are set to mature in 2048.

Existing bonds tied to a

similar Meta project in Louisiana were trading at a yield about half a percentage point lower than the new deal's interest rate on Monday.

More deals tied to Meta are likely. The company has been locking up future data-center capacity and has issued several requests for proposals on additional projects related to real estate, energy and other AI infrastructure, the people said.

Dina Powell McCormick, a Goldman Sachs veteran and former Trump official who joined Meta as president and vice chairman in January, is helping to lead the effort. In recent months, she and other Meta executives have met with BlackRock's Larry Fink, Blackstone's Stephen Schwarzman and Jon Gray, and Brookfield's Chief Executive Bruce Flatt, said people familiar with the meetings.

Powell McCormick co-leads, with Daniel Gross and Santosh Janardhan, a team called Meta Compute, a division that was charged by Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg to map out the company's strategy to secure computing power. They work with Chief Financial Officer Susan Li on the financing.

For years, Meta had little need to borrow, thanks to a highly profitable advertising business that gushed cash. It wasn't until 2022, a decade after Meta's initial public offering, that the company issued its first corporate bond.

In the past nine months, its borrowing went into over-

drive. In October, Meta raised \$30 billion, doubling its debt load, in one of the year's largest corporate bond offerings. The company followed that up in April with an additional \$25 billion in new bond sales.

Meta has gotten creative about keeping billions of dollars of borrowing off its balance sheet. The Hyperion data-center project in Louisiana was structured as a venture with investment firm Blue Owl Capital. Funds managed by Blue Owl invested about \$3 billion into the project and received an 80% ownership stake. A holding company owning that stake, Beignet Investor, issued \$27 billion in bonds to finance the construction of the two-gigawatt complex.

For the Beignet and Sopaipilla bonds, Meta provided a guarantee that makes bondholders whole if Meta opted not to renew its lease or terminate it early. That helped each offering get investment-grade ratings. Sopaipilla received an A+ from S&P and a AA- from Fitch.

Data-center developers have gone on their own borrowing binges to build capacity for Meta. Meta signed a long-term lease to occupy a more-than-three-gigawatt facility in Shippingport, Pa., being developed by Aligned Data Centers, a digital infrastructure landlord and operator that a BlackRock-led consortium acquired in a \$20 billion deal last week. Banks are providing a \$10 billion project-finance package for the site's construction, people familiar with the matter said.

Bankers have told clients they aren't sure the interest rates will ease soon—an issue that has AI companies reassessing their estimates for how much the infrastructure build-out will cost.

Just like how extreme demand for materials and semiconductors has sent data-center construction costs soaring, extreme demand for capital is pushing up interest rates.

Still, there's little appetite to wait and see. Investors are willing to lend at the right price, and AI companies favor paying now versus risking any construction delay.



Meta paid more for funds to finance its El Paso project.

OMAR ORNELAS/USA TODAY NETWORK/IMAGI IMAGES/REUTERS

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WORLD NEWS

Strains Chill Reception for Netanyahu

Meeting with Trump ends with mutual praise but no signal on Iran war strategy

By Robbie Gramer and Anat Peled

President Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met at the White House on Tuesday, navigating a growing rift five months after the two launched a war in Iran that has proved far more complex than either imagined. Tensions between the two had simmered for weeks. It was unclear until late last week that Trump would even entertain a meeting with Netanyahu. To secure an audience, the Trump administration pressed the Israeli leader to take steps to show he was serious about advancing U.S.-brokered peace talks in Lebanon and Gaza, according to officials and people familiar with the matter. And then hours before the meeting Tuesday, Trump appeared to bristle at the possibility that Israel was publicly trying to pressure the White House to continue the Iran war. He said in a Fox News interview that an Iranian site known as Pickaxe mountain, a focus of recent Israeli intelligence, was “not a big problem.” When the roughly hourlong meeting concluded, Netanyahu described the meeting as “one of the best conversations” he’d ever had with the U.S. president. A senior White House official said Trump had a strong relationship with Netanyahu and praised Israel for helping the U.S. blunt Iran’s ability to



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Trump in the Oval Office on Tuesday, in a photo released by Israel.

develop a nuclear weapon. Despite these statements, neither side offered a clear signal about the White House’s near-term Iran strategy and what role Israel would play in it. Facing mounting criticism at home ahead of upcoming elections, Netanyahu had sought for months to get a meeting with Trump. He arrived in Washington with significantly less clout and influence than he had on past visits, officials said, and came highly attuned to what the president would want to discuss—or what would set him off. Sen. Lindsey Graham’s recent death was also a major blow to the Israeli leader, as the South Carolina Republican

had long served as an intermediary between Netanyahu and Trump. Netanyahu’s political problems in the U.S. had been growing for months, as he faces pushback from Trump’s fellow Republicans as well as Democrats. Before his visit, Trump voiced frustrations at Netanyahu behind closed doors to confidantes and in public interviews as the conflict dragged on, officials said. Points of strain in the U.S.-Israeli relationship include the conflicts in Gaza and in Lebanon between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah forces. To secure the meeting with Trump, Netanyahu

agreed to pull back Israeli forces from “pilot zones” in southern Lebanon, where the Lebanese armed forces are deploying to test their ability to secure designated areas. He also announced that Israel would allow members of the Trump-led Board of Peace to enter Gaza after months of stalemate. The Israeli Prime Minister’s office didn’t respond to a request for comment. After meeting with Trump, Netanyahu attended Graham’s funeral. As guests filed into the National Cathedral for the funeral, Netanyahu was seen chatting with other senior administration officials, including U.N. Ambassador Mike

Waltz and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, as well as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who had met with Trump earlier in the day. When Fox News host Sean Hannity spoke at Graham’s funeral, he described Graham as Israel’s greatest friend. Netanyahu and his wife, sitting in the audience, nodded along. The last meeting between Trump and Netanyahu took place in February, shortly before the start of the joint U.S.-Israeli bombing campaign in Iran. At the time, Netanyahu and the former chief of Israel’s Mossad spy agency presented Trump with plans to topple the Iranian regime, according to an Israeli official.

Iran Fires Missiles at U.S. Forces

Continued from Page One going to be gone, literally in less than—I would say in two hours, most of the bridges, the major bridges will all be gone, and the power plants in one day,” he said. He said that Iran had agreed to give up its nuclear weapons ambitions but needed “make it formal,” he said. “I just want very simply—they cannot have a nuclear weapon. Very simple. And they’ve agreed to that. Essentially, we have to get them to, you know, make it formal.” Iran launched the attack

five months after the war began on Feb. 28, when the U.S. and Israel began airstrikes that killed a swath of the Islamic Republic’s leadership, including its top ruler, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The barrage capped several weeks of wobbly diplomacy, during which the U.S. and Iran agreed in June to end hostilities. But disputes over how to reopen the Strait of Hormuz—through which 20% of global oil production flows before the war—prompted Trump to order almost two weeks of airstrikes on Iran this month. Trump paused those strikes on Friday to give peace talks a chance. On Tuesday, Iran said it had rejected an Omani plan for resuming traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, pushing its own proposal that would give Tehran more control over shipping in the strategic waterway. The White House didn’t re-

spond to a request for comment on Iran’s latest attacks. Two Senior U.S. officials said they believed the IRGC is actively trying to undermine negotiations to renew the ceasefire and reopen the strait. U.S. oil prices jumped 4% to more than \$82 a barrel after news of the Iranian attack. Middle East analysts say the price of crude oil is an economic weapon that Iran has wielded effectively against the U.S., where high fuel prices have fed inflation. The latest strikes came after three U.S. soldiers died in an Iranian missile strike on Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, Jordan, in mid-July. The missile barrage, one of three on the base in a 24-hour period, struck prefabricated housing units where troops lived and slept, The Wall Street Journal reported. That three missiles were

able to slip through the base’s defenses point to the challenges in protecting an estimated 50,000 U.S. troops in the Middle East from Iranian missiles and drones, which are still a deadly force even after months of U.S. airstrikes. “The Trump admin cannot afford to let this surprise attack go unanswered,” said Behnam Ben Taleblu, of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. “For the United States, these attacks are not the costs of war, rather the costs of unfinished business.” “Iran is striking the U.S. to show that it can take the initiative and take the fight to the U.S.,” said Danny Citrinowicz, a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, an Israel-based think tank. Though Trump had paused airstrikes, the country’s rulers see a continued U.S. military blockade of its

ports as an act of war that needs a response, he said. “Iranian leaders increasingly interpret Washington’s caution as a sign of hesitation and a lack of political will to sustain a prolonged confrontation,” Citrinowicz said in a post on X. “In Tehran’s assessment, that creates an opportunity to test American resolve.” In recent weeks, the war’s footprint has expanded far beyond Iran and the Arab Persian Gulf states that Tehran has attacked in retaliation for American airstrikes. Iran-backed militants in Yemen, the Houthis, have attacked Red Sea ships in an attempt to enforce a blockade of Saudi oil shipments, prompting Riyadh and its Yemeni allies to launch their own assaults. Saudi Arabia said Tehran-supported militias have been firing drones on its oil fields and other infrastructure.

Zelensky Heeds Calls of Protesters

By Yaroslav Trofimov

Ukrainians who flooded the streets this month to protest the dismissal of the nation’s popular defense minister came out with their children and pets. The atmosphere was more akin to a music festival than an antigovernment rally in the middle of a war. The one thing the protesters correctly didn’t expect, and didn’t prepare for, was the possibility that President Volodymyr Zelensky would order security forces to disperse them. In fact, as soon as the demonstrations began, Zelensky said he would carefully listen to public opinion. Within days, he yielded to perhaps the most significant of the protesters’ demands, firing the country’s top military commander, Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy, who was widely criticized for sticking to old-school Soviet ways and hampering change. He then named a new, young and popular defense chief. Zelensky exhibited the same pattern of behavior a year earlier, when street protests led him to reverse legislation that limited the independence of anticorruption prosecutors and courts. These independent prosecutors since have indicted Zelensky’s powerful chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, who has been dismissed, and other close associates on corruption

charges. Yermak has denied the charges. “The authorities here must listen to the people,” said opposition lawmaker Yaroslav Zhelezniak, a frequent critic of Zelensky. “Any Ukrainian president—including Zelensky—can attempt to build his autocratic system only until the moment when society comes out on the street and says: We don’t like it. And then, there is nothing that can be done anymore. This is how it is, historically. It’s in Ukrainian blood.” This month’s protests, and Zelensky’s partial climbdown, were laughed off in the Russian media as a sign of Ukrainian weakness, proof that the Ukrainian state is crumbling under wartime pressure. Only a few Russian military analysts noted that it took a military uprising by warlord Yevgeny Prigozhin in 2023 to replace Russia’s defense minister, while defense chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov, 70 years old, remains in place despite the many failures of the Russian war effort. “Many, if not most, Russians are looking at the protests in Ukraine with jealousy,” said Russian political analyst Abbas Gallyamov, a former speechwriter for Russian President Vladimir Putin. “At a time when Russia is turning more and more repressive, it turns out you can go out and demonstrate, and



Ukrainians took part in protests following the dismissal of the defense minister this month.

Ukraine President Says He Discussed Weapons With Trump

President Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met Tuesday and discussed ways for Ukraine to produce its own powerful weapons, and “other ideas that could help” in its war against Russia. The Oval Office sit-down, which was closed to the media, followed a consequential meeting at the NATO summit this month, where Trump said the U.S. will give Kyiv a license to make Patriot defense systems. In a social-media post, Zelensky thanked Trump and the Republican administration’s efforts to help Kyiv. Later, Zelensky posted that he met with officials from Lockheed Martin for further cooperation in both defense production and exchanging of technologies. —Associated Press

you won’t be immediately jailed or hit on the head.” While Ukraine’s political system has a feedback loop that permits the correction of mistakes made by Zelensky, the entire Russian state machine, with its mighty intelligence and analysis apparatus, has been reduced to endorsing Putin’s decisions, he added.

“The only thing anyone can do now is to approve, and all the decisions are being made by the cockroaches roaming inside the head of one aging man who has lost connection with reality,” Gallyamov said. It is precisely this social involvement and flexibility, on all levels of power and inside the military, that has allowed

Ukraine to survive 4½ years of war against its giant neighbor. The nation’s allergy to authoritarian rule has persisted despite wartime restrictions, which include the postponement of presidential and parliamentary elections that, absent a war, were due to be held in 2024. “Ukraine has arguably the most highly mobilized civil so-

Tehran Rejects Bid To Share Hormuz

By Benoit Faucon and Summer Said

Iran rejected a proposal to evenly divide control of the Strait of Hormuz. Oman, which sits opposite Iran across the strait, suggested a temporary plan to establish even lanes of control, but Tehran demanded Tuesday that it take the lion’s share of the waterway critical to the flow of the world’s oil supply, one of its top diplomats said. A lull in fighting between the U.S. and Iran since Friday had prompted a new push for mediation, which included a proposed 10-day ceasefire plan. But in a new escalation Tuesday evening, Iran launched a ballistic-missile attack on American forces in the Middle East, further complicating efforts to resolve the conflict. Earlier, officials in mediating countries said they were incensed by Tehran’s rejection of the Oman plan. Tehran will only move to the next stage of negotiations if Oman agrees to Iran’s Hormuz plan, said Iran’s deputy foreign minister, Kazem Gharibabadi. Oman had proposed an equal division of transit routes between the two states. Gharibabadi said that plan “doesn’t address Iran’s security concerns.” Tehran countered with a plan under which one direction of traffic would pass through solely Iranian waters and part of the opposite lane would also be Iranian, Gharibabadi told state television. “The inbound shipping lane must be entirely under Iran’s control, while part of the outbound lane may remain under Oman’s control,” he said. “If they accept this proposal, we will move on to the next stage.” In talks with Oman, Tehran insisted on retaining full control of the waterway because U.S. military supplies used to attack its territory transited the strait, an Iranian official said Monday. Iran sits on the northern side of the narrow waterway, while Oman controls the top of the point of land jutting out of the southern shore. “The strait is an international waterway, and Iran cannot control or restrict transit through it,” a U.S. official said Tuesday. Iran, the official said, “is overreaching with unreasonable demands.” Before the war, roughly 100 ships passed freely through the strait each day, without the payment of any fees. ciety anywhere in Europe today, in terms of the willingness to stand up for what they believe in, and to challenge their leaders,” said Geoffrey Pyatt, who served as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine during the 2014 Maidan revolution, and as an assistant secretary of state in the Biden administration. “This has now been hardwired into Ukraine’s political culture.” The tradition goes back to the common heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, to which most of the country belonged for centuries, said prominent Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak, a professor at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv. Leaders of the autonomous Cossack state that existed in Ukraine in the 17th century were by tradition smeared in mud and dirt on assuming power, as a sign that they weren’t inherently superior to those they would rule. “What distinguishes Ukrainians from Russians is not language or religion, though there is a difference there,” Hrytsak said. “The real difference is political culture: In Ukraine, the state is not sacralized, and therefore a Ukrainian Putin or a Ukrainian Stalin is impossible. Ukrainian society is skeptical. It never trusted the state, and rarely loved even those whom it elected to power.” Indeed, while Putin has been in power since 1999, no Ukrainian president has won re-election this century. The only one of the six since independence in 1991 who dared to use force against protesters, Viktor Yanukovych during the Maidan revolution in 2013-14, ultimately was ousted and fled to exile in Russia.

WORLD NEWS

China Evades Hurdles to Get Mideast Oil

Beijing reaps the benefits of steady partnerships with Tehran and its foes

By Austin Ramzy and Rebecca Feng

War-time disruptions at two shipping chokepoints in the Middle East are sending shock waves through global markets. China has still found a way to get oil from the region.

Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen last week began to attack Saudi-linked oil tankers at the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, expanding the Iran conflict and disrupting a Red Sea route that Saudi Arabia has used to bypass the Strait of Hormuz and deliver oil to customers in Asia. But the rebels gave safe passage to two Chinese oil tankers carrying Saudi oil through the Bab al-Mandeb. Both ships broadcast “Chinese crew and owner” as they sailed.

At least two more China-bound supertankers, loaded with Saudi oil, have since cleared the strait. The rebels appear to be holding fire on behalf of Iran’s friends.

Across the Arabian Peninsula at the Strait of Hormuz, the resumption of a U.S. blockade and the threat of Iranian attacks have impeded the transit of oil tankers. That hasn’t stopped China from importing Iranian oil by drawing on a floating reserve off Malaysia, an established channel that circumvents U.S. sanctions.

“Fuel security is a major geopolitical lever and China has historically been in a vulnerable position as a big importer, but they’ve gone to great lengths to reduce that vulnerability,” said Saul Kavonic, head of energy research at MST Financial, a Sydney-based financial services firm. Iran’s continued influence in Hormuz “strengthens the hand of China with regard to that geopolitical leverage.”

How China has worked

around blockades that have disrupted global markets shows the benefits of Beijing’s longtime position as both a financial lifeline to Iran and a customer for its foes.

The China connection is so useful that, at the height of the war in March, some Chinese crewmen said they would display Chinese flags on their vessels’ decks to win safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, even if their ships weren’t Chinese-flagged.

That tactic hasn’t always worked. In May, Iran struck the Marshall Islands-flagged tanker JV Innovation, despite its Chinese owner and mostly Chinese crew, triggering a fire on deck. Beijing said it was “deeply concerned” about vessels stranded in the strait, and called for restoring unimpeded passage. But China has done little to rein in Iran and has provided it with diplomatic support.

China buys about 90% of Iran’s oil exports—helping Tehran endure punishing

sanctions—but also buys oil from Saudi Arabia, a rival to Iran. Before the war, nearly half of China’s crude-oil imports passed through the Strait of Hormuz.

China has shown during the war that it can sway global oil markets by cutting its imports. Iranian oil arriving in China this year declined from a high of 1.7 million barrels a day in March, before the U.S. blockade began, to 785,000 barrels a day in June and 523,000 in July, according to data from Kpler, a commodity research firm.

China’s ability to work around chokepoints gives it access to cheap Iranian oil despite the war and the U.S. naval blockade. The share of Iranian crude in China’s total imports climbed to more than

24% in May and 18% in June, compared with 15% in February, according to ship-tracking company Vortexa. Officially, China hasn’t logged any imports of Iranian oil since 2022.

Iran appeared to take advantage of a monthlong pause in the U.S. blockade to rush out oil exports, exporting about \$5 billion to \$6 billion in oil before the blockade resumed in mid-July, analysts said.

Those shipments headed to an area off the coast of Malaysia where tankers from Iran unload oil to vessels that continue onward to China, a sanctions-evasion strategy.

Long-established goods trade between Iran and China also got a boost by the temporary lifting of the blockade, according to a Wall Street Journal review of maritime-traffic

data. The volume of Iran-flagged cargo ships visiting Chinese ports dropped after the war started, and jumped after the U.S. blockade paused in mid-June, the data show. After the blockade resumed, at least 10 such ships were seen in or just outside Chinese ports.

Those ships carry anything from consumer goods to machinery from Chinese ports. Iranian cargo ships have been accused of transporting chemicals from China used to help power Iranian missiles.

While the Houthi rebels bring their fight against Saudi Arabia to the Bab al-Mandeb, two Chinese supertankers crossed the strait loaded with oil from the Saudi Aramco-ExxonMobil refinery on Thursday—and are headed to China. Over the weekend, two China-bound, Hong Kong-flagged supertankers exited the Red Sea via Bab al-Mandeb loaded with Saudi crude. Two empty Chinese supertankers are still in the Red Sea, awaiting orders.

Japan Earthquake Kills at Least 13, Mall Collapses

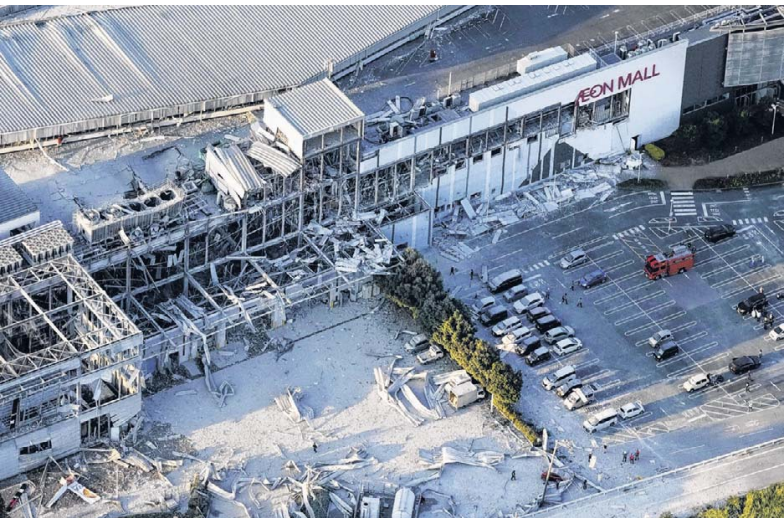
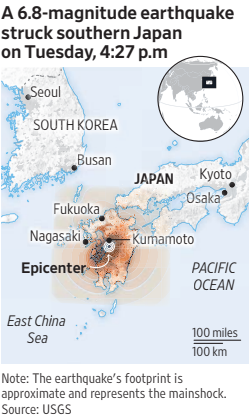
By Yang Jie and Junko Fukutome

TOKYO—Rescue operations were under way at a Japanese shopping mall and over 200,000 people have been issued evacuation orders in the region after a strong earthquake struck southern Japan on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said Wednesday that 13 people were killed in the quake, and there were many injuries.

The magnitude-6.8 quake at 4:27 p.m. Tuesday hit Kumamoto, a rural prefecture on the island of Kyushu that has transformed into a tech powerhouse with a Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. plant.

More than an hour after the quake, an apparent explosion rocked an Aeon shopping mall near the quake’s epicenter. The local fire department said a second-floor section col-



An apparent explosion rocked a shopping mall near the Japan earthquake’s epicenter.

had sent government staff to the region to assess the damage. Kumamoto prefecture has a population of over 1.6 million.

More than 260,000 people were issued evacuation orders inside as emergency responders worked to free them. Footage aired on public broadcaster NHK showed rescuers entering the building to search for survivors.

The prime minister said she

Meteorological Agency measured at 7.1, triggered precautionary safety protocols across industrial sites in Kumamoto.

TSMC, the world’s largest contract chip maker, said its local subsidiary activated emergency procedures and evacuated all personnel.

All staff were confirmed safe and initial structural inspections found the facility structure to be safe, allowing operations to gradually resume,

according to the company.

The quake prompted chip suppliers, equipment makers and other TSMC partners in the area to check on staff and assess damage. Sony’s semiconductor unit said its staff had been safely evacuated.

A decade ago, a pair of earthquakes 28 hours apart killed more than 200 people in Kumamoto and severely damaged Kumamoto Castle, a popular tourist destination.

Indonesia Central Bank Chief Resigns

By Ying Xian Wong

Long-serving Bank Indonesia Gov. Perry Warjiyo stepped down in a surprise move, the latest leadership change under the Prabowo administration that is likely to stoke worries about central bank independence and economic policymaking in Southeast Asia’s largest nation.

State Secretary Minister Prasetyo Hadi announced the resignation at a news conference in Jakarta on Monday, which wasn’t attended by Warjiyo. He said President Prabowo Subianto accepted the central bank chief’s resignation.

Senior Deputy Gov. Destry Damayanti will take over as acting BI governor. Warjiyo stepped down for personal reasons, Destry said. Warjiyo led central bank since 2018 and was serving a second term, set to expire in 2028.

The resignation comes as Indonesia’s financial markets have been pressured by domestic and external forces, with the government’s economic policy and fiscal discipline under scrutiny, and questions lingering about the country’s market appeal.

Moody’s Ratings and Fitch Ratings have flagged concerns about the reliability and transparency of policymaking, while FTSE Russell and MSCI have highlighted market-accessibility issues.

The rupiah is among Asia’s worst-performing major currencies this year, down nearly 8% against the dollar. The Jakarta Composite Index has fallen more than 28%, making it the region’s weakest-performing stock market.

Warjiyo is the second high-profile official to depart in the past year. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, who served as Indonesia’s finance minister for nearly 14 of the past 20 years and was long seen as the country’s fiscal guardian, was removed in a cabinet shuffle last September.

Questions about central bank independence have arisen after President Prabowo nominated his nephew, Thomas Djiwandono, as a BI deputy governor early this year.

Last week, Indonesia’s central bank held interest rates steady, taking a breather after delivering 100 basis points of rate increases in May and June.

Indonesia could be signaling near-term monetary-policy continuity with the appointment of Destry as acting BI governor, and that rupiah stability remains the key focus, according to a note by OCBC economists.

Still, “there is limited clarity at this juncture on whether this appointment is temporary or permanent,” economists Lavanya Venkateswaran and Ahmad A Enver wrote. A permanent position would reassure markets of policy continuity, while a temporary role could prolong uncertainty and leave the burden of maintaining stability to her eventual successor, they said.

Wet Winter, Hot Summer Spur Wildfires in Europe

Some of the largest wildfires to sweep through Europe since World War II had an unusual spark: an exceptionally wet winter. That turbocharged vegetation growth, which then collided with some of the driest, hottest weather on record.

By Margherita Stancati, Noemie Bissierbe and Ed Ballard

The result was a tinderbox. It exploded in recent days as devastating wildfires ripped through regions of France and Spain, forcing more than 300,000 people to evacuate.

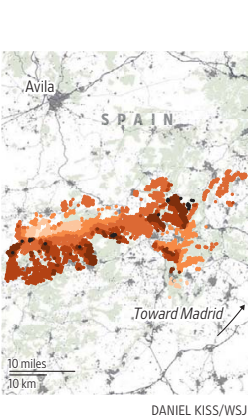
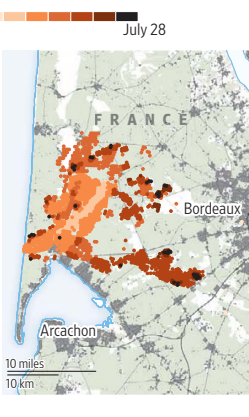
In southwestern France, in the region around the city of Bordeaux, more than 100,000 acres have burned. The fire has moved quickly through the region’s pine forests, forcing more than 220,000 residents and vacationers to evacuate at the height of the tourist season.

In Spain, the fires have destroyed more than 370,000 acres this year. Isabel Diaz Ayuso, the leader of Madrid’s local government, described the Madrid wildfires as perhaps “the worst natural catastrophe in Spain’s history.”

The intensity of the fires has created large, fire-fueled thunderstorms, known as pyrocumulonimbus clouds, for the first time in France’s recent history.

The clouds are created by intense heat that lifts hot smoky air and causes the water vapor to condense into ash. The clouds can generate lightning, further spreading the fires.

Rising temperatures in Europe set the stage for the extreme weather, scientists say. Europe is the world’s fastest warming continent. Temperatures in Europe are 2.5 degrees Celsius warmer than in the preindustrial era, com-



A house west of Madrid was destroyed by a wildfire.

Rising temperatures also mean that Europe’s wildfire season is getting longer, with officials saying that this one could last until early November.

Another factor behind Europe’s intensifying fires is the growing amount of wild vegetation in Europe. Many young people have left rural areas to work in urban spots, abandoning farmland that provided some of the best protection against fires. Fields and forests have been left unmanaged, with shrubs and plants growing where livestock once grazed. Some parts of Europe have as much forest cover now as they did at any time in the past 100,000 years, according to estimates by Víctor Resco de Dios, a forestry expert at the University of Lleida.

for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts. “You go from extreme wet to extreme dry.”

Several heat waves have hit Europe recently. June was especially brutal, with temperatures

exceeding 104 degrees Fahrenheit in some places. It was the warmest June ever recorded in Western Europe.

Warmer air absorbs more water, drying out vegetation.

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WORLD NEWS



Peru's new president, Keiko Fujimori, waves following her inauguration Tuesday in Lima.

PERU
Conservative Leader Becomes President

Conservative leader Keiko Fujimori was sworn in as Peru's president on Tuesday after winning the June presidential runoff by a margin of fewer than 50,000 votes, a victory that confirmed a regional shift in South America toward the conservative wing. Fujimori, a four-time presidential candidate and leader of Peru's largest political party, takes office as the country's ninth president in a decade. The 51-year-old is hoping to stabilize Peru's turbulent politics, reduce crime and boost economic growth. She is the daughter of former President Alberto Fujimori, who led the country in the 1990s and stabilized its economy while defeating terror groups, but was later imprisoned for human rights abuses committed under his rule by the Peruvian military as his government took an authoritarian turn.

—Associated Press

WORLD WATCH

CONGO
Ebola Cases Near Record at 3,200

Confirmed cases in Congo's Ebola outbreak have reached 3,262, the country's Ministry of Health said Tuesday, nearly the same as the 2018-20 record high outbreak. Health ministry data show 1,437 patients have died out of the 3,262 cases. Only the 2014-16 outbreak across West Africa, considered the worst in history, had a higher toll with 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths. The current outbreak's speed of transmission comes amid concerns from residents that many communities are either unreachable or have been abandoned by responders in recent days over safety concerns amid attacks from angry residents and rebels. Efforts to slow the transmission have been challenged by rebel violence in eastern Congo as well as health workers striking to protest the nonpayment of their wages.

—Associated Press

SOUTH KOREA
Phosphorus Leak Forces Evacuations

South Korean authorities ordered civilians to evacuate Tuesday after a suspected white phosphorus leak at a U.S. military base near Seoul. White phosphorus is a chemical substance used in incendiary munitions and smoke shells. When ignited, it burns at extremely high temperatures and can set buildings ablaze and burn human flesh to the bone. The U.S. 51st Fighter Wing said it established a 300-meter cordon around the base "out of an abundance of caution" after experts conducting a routine inspection identified white phosphorus crystallization that left residue inside a munitions crate. The cordon was lifted after emergency personnel mitigated the situation, allowing the base to return to normal operations, officials said. There were "no injuries resulting from this situation."

—Associated Press

FROM PAGE ONE



A healthcare provider prepped an MMR vaccine. Right, President Trump with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in May 2025. Trump is focused on vaccines' alleged tie to autism.

Trump Pushes on Vaccinations

Continued from Page One prompting Kennedy in June to petition an appeals court for a quicker decision. White House spokesman Kush Desai said countless parents with questions and concerns about "America's skyrocketing autism rates have long been ignored if not mocked." He said that changed the day President Trump took office. "The Trump administration is committed to leaving no stone unturned to finally address these concerns with Gold Standard Science," he said. "Secretary Kennedy and President Trump are aligned in their commitment to confronting the chronic disease epidemic affecting America's children through rigorous, gold-standard science," said HHS spokeswoman Emily Hilliard.

Childhood vaccines

Trump has long mused publicly and privately about whether vaccines cause autism, despite reassurances from scientific advisers in his first term that they don't and the widespread conclusion among scientists that there is no valid reason for concern. Scientists in mainstream academic settings also say there is no scientific justification for dramatically paring down the childhood vaccine schedule. They say vaccines today are more precise and stimulate the immune system with fewer antigens than vaccines in the past while protecting against more diseases. Trump has talked about his particular interest in the vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella, known as MMR. He has said he would like to break up the combination shot into separate shots, though scientists have said there is no scientific reason to do that and that it could result in missed shots. Multiple scientific studies have shown no connection between the MMR vaccine and autism, including a 2019 *Annals of Internal Medicine* study of more than 600,000 children in Denmark and a 2021 Cochrane review of 138 studies. Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affected roughly 1 in 31 8-year-olds in the U.S. in 2022. Estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention give the number of children identified with autism spectrum disorder in 2000 as about 1 in 150. Scientists have yet to pinpoint a definitive cause for the rise in rates. Some have suggested that genetics, older parents or better screening and diagnosis systems are likely behind the rise in cases. The president now hopes alleviating autism could be part of his legacy, people familiar with the matter said. He has told his health secretary that doing so should be Kennedy's most important health policy priority, other people familiar with the matter said. The president is generally supportive of vaccines for adults, including Covid and flu shots, which he received last fall. He often complained that he didn't receive enough credit for his first administration's effort to boost Covid vaccine development. But he has remained skeptical of childhood shots. In the 2000s, Trump gave to and fundraised for autism non-profits that linked the condition to vaccines. "If I were President I would push for proper vaccinations but would not allow one time massive shots that a small child cannot take - AUTISM," he posted on social media in 2014. Trump has said an unnamed friend's child became autistic after a vaccine and that he knows three people whose children had adverse reactions to vaccines, sometimes becoming emotional about the topic, people familiar with the matter said. "I really believe Donald Trump cares about this vaccine issue," said Del Bigtree, a prominent antivaccine activist who ran communications for Kennedy's independent presidential bid. "I think he's seen it hit close to home in some way." The president has indicated that he is open to the idea that the rise in autism rates may have multiple causes. In September, Trump and Kennedy warned the public about what the men said was a potential link between autism and Tylenol taken during pregnancy. Behind the scenes, Kennedy had been promising he would deliver an answer on autism. When a new study on Tylenol by one of Harvard's top public health researchers was released, he saw it as something that could be presented to the president, according to people familiar with the matter.



FROM LEFT: ANNE KLEIN/SHUTTERSTOCK; JIM LO SCALZO/BOOMBERG NEWS

"Ideally, you don't take it at all," Trump said of Tylenol at the press conference. He also encouraged parents to space out vaccines and complained about doctors' visits in which "they pump the baby, load it up with stuff." Prior to the event, Trump's health advisers had tried to persuade him to moderate his statements on Tylenol, people familiar with the matter said, and they were much more cautious in their language. Longtime Trump pollster Tony Fabrizio last winter found

Trump wants to reduce the vaccinations recommended for children.

that vaccine skepticism was unpopular with voters, while people were more interested in Kennedy's efforts to improve the quality of food and agriculture. White House and Health department aides recommended Kennedy focus instead on more appealing topics, such as removing dyes from food, ahead of the midterm elections. Kennedy and his staff got on board with the new focus, with top adviser Calley Means penning a memo about "green light" messaging, such as touting the new dietary guidelines, and "red light" topics, such as vaccines, people familiar with the matter said. In almost all of his public appearances since, Kennedy avoided speaking

about vaccines. But the president, at odds with the advice of his top aides, hasn't dropped his focus on the issue. Inside HHS, officials have scrambled to figure out how to do more on the autism issue, with Kennedy eager to show the president progress, people familiar with the matter said. Former Harvard epidemiologist Martin Kulldorff, who gained fame as a critic of vaccine mandates and other pandemic health measures and now works for Kennedy's Health department, is leading a series of vaccine studies. The National Institutes of Health has also kicked off a series of studies on autism-related issues. In January, Kennedy proposed cutting the recommended childhood shots, to vaccinations against 11 diseases, down from 17 under previous guidelines. But federal Judge Brian E. Murphy blocked the plan in March, saying the government appeared to have improperly bypassed a vaccine advisory panel tasked with making recommendations on immunizations. He also ruled that many of Kennedy's picks to the vaccine panel were unlawfully appointed. The government is appealing the decision about the appointment of the panel's members.

Kennedy's progress on MAHA issues overall has been slow-going. The secretary's backers in the administration and Congress, as well as social-media influencers in his movement, underscore as his greatest accomplishments the new dietary guidelines that encourage Americans to "eat real food," as well as voluntary commitments by companies to remove dyes from food products. But other parts of MAHA's food reform agenda have stalled, including promises to get what he called toxic additives and pesticides out of the food chain, and there are growing concerns over how the secretary's food plans could push up costs for consumers. Meanwhile, the Health department is facing broader issues, including a fight with states over alleged Medicaid fraud, staff vacancies, a three-decade high in the number of measles cases and an expanding cyclosporiasis outbreak.

'Ideas guy'

Kennedy has had a friendly relationship with Trump—who gets a kick out of having someone from the famously Democratic family on his team. Trump sang his praises at the rescheduled White House Correspondents' Association dinner. "We love Bobby...he has what it takes and he's smart and he loves the country and he wants people to be made to feel good." But White House aides took issue with Kennedy's management of his department last winter and oversaw a top-to-bottom review, including to address infighting between the Health department and staff at the FDA. Two top leaders were reassigned, and a team of advisers to Kennedy was restructured. Kennedy's Medicare chief, Chris Klomp, also took over day-to-day operations of the sprawling Health department. Klomp, who won the White House's favor while

negotiating drug-pricing deals with pharmaceutical companies, has been nominated for the deputy secretary position at HHS. Some administration officials view Kennedy as the "ideas guy" at HHS while Klomp is empowered to run the department. Trump has been turning more and more to Dr. Mehmet Oz, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator, who many lobbyists and HHS staff privately speculate will one day replace Kennedy, perhaps following the midterm elections. The president often calls or texts Oz on health policy matters that have nothing to do with his agency, people familiar with the matter said, and Oz takes responsibility for ensuring the president gets what he wants. Oz advised the president on marijuana ahead of an executive order in December to loosen restrictions on the drug, some of the people said. Oz, an adept surrogate for the administration on TV and in the halls of Congress, is also a favorite of the White House staff.

The MAHA movement was rolled earlier this summer when Dr. Robert Malone, one of Kennedy's associates formerly on the vaccine panel, posted on X a rumor that Kennedy would depart his job after July 4 and that Oz was to head a transition team. HHS leaders said the rumor was false, with Oz telling a roomful of supporters gathered at Ned's Club near the White House that there was no truth to the assertion, according to people familiar with the gathering. Kennedy's son, Robert F. Kennedy III, then shouted out: My dad's not a quitter! The secretary wants to have longevity in the administration—and even to stay on as secretary into the next president's administration, according to people familiar with his thinking. His goal is to survive political pressure from Trump's aides and make the president happy, the people said. He rarely pushes back on the White House on contentious issues, even on matters key to his movement, such as pesticides. Trump sided with farmers and chemical companies in February to protect certain pesticides.



A display about the new food guidelines announced by Kennedy in January.

By ANNE TERGESEN AND THEO FRANCIS

More Americans have built up suppersize sums in their tax-advantaged retirement accounts. But those with more modest means can also grow their own nest eggs bigger than they might think.

Nearly 12,000 taxpayers had individual retirement accounts with at least \$10 million in 2024, the latest year for which figures are available, according to new data prepared by the nonpartisan congressional Joint Committee on Taxation. That's up from 3,625 with similar balances in 2019, the analysis of anonymized tax-return data found.

Meanwhile, most Americans have saved less than \$100,000 in their retirement accounts.

Tax benefits boost returns for money stowed in a 401(k) or IRA. They shield investment income and gains on sales from taxation. Around 70% of private-sector employees in the U.S. now have access to a 401(k)-style retirement plan.

A Wall Street Journal article last week explored how some people amassed retirement-account fortunes by putting shares of startups in them when they were worth peanuts, then watched the share prices multiply many times over. But you don't need access to startup shares to amass significant money in these accounts.

Here's a guide for the everyday saver.

Step 1: Save the maximum

To start, workers can put up to \$24,500 into a 401(k) or similar workplace retirement plan this year. People 50 and older can save \$8,000 more in "catch-up" contributions, for a total of \$32,500. Those ages 60 to 63 can save a total of \$35,750. The maximums typically rise each year with inflation.

The same contribution limits apply to both traditional and Roth 401(k) accounts, and if you want to contribute to both you have to divide the \$24,500 between the two. In a traditional pretax retirement account, savers don't pay income tax on their contributions, and instead pay the tax when they withdraw the money in retirement. In a Roth account, owners contribute after-tax money, which can generally be withdrawn tax-free, along with investment gains.

It's possible to save even more by contributing up to an additional \$7,500 to an IRA, a limit that rises to \$8,600 for workers 50 and older. However, some higher earners covered by a retirement plan at work won't be able to deduct their traditional IRA contributions.

Step 2: Go through back door

Direct Roth IRA contributions are off limits for single filers with modified adjusted gross incomes



Everyday Guide to Supersizing Your Retirement Account

There are a number of tricks to grow a tax-advantaged 401(k) or IRA into a fortune

of \$168,000 or more and couples with incomes of \$252,000 or more.

But they can still add funds indirectly through a backdoor Roth IRA conversion.

To do this, first put money you already paid income taxes on into a traditional IRA. Then convert it to a Roth IRA. Because you already paid income tax on the contribution, you will only owe tax on the appreciation your investments had earned when you convert the money.

If you have multiple IRAs, there may be tax complications to pursuing this strategy.

Step 3: Mega-backdoor

The mega-backdoor Roth conversion is available to a growing number of people with 401(k) accounts.

This rests on a little-known fact about 401(k) plans: Employees can really set aside as much as \$72,000 in these accounts this year, under Internal Revenue Service rules, rising to as much as \$80,000 for those 50 and older

and \$83,250 for people in their early sixties.

To go beyond the usual \$24,500 limit on pretax or Roth 401(k) contributions, a worker might be able to contribute as much as another \$47,500 to the 401(k)—and then convert that money to a Roth 401(k). (Company contributions, including a match, also figure into the \$72,000 limit.)

Once the money is in the Roth, it grows tax-free.

To take advantage of the mega-backdoor strategy, you have to work for a company that lets employees make after-tax contributions to the 401(k) plan. Nearly two-thirds of the large 401(k) plans administered by Alight offer after-tax contributions. The vast majority let participants convert after-tax balances to a Roth inside the plan.

Some 401(k) plans will automate the conversions every pay period. And many also allow the conversion of pretax savings to a Roth.

Someone who saved the equivalent of today's \$72,000 maximum

in a 401(k) account every year from 1984 until 2019—adding catch-ups once eligible—would have had \$20.6 million by the end of 2024, assuming returns consistent with the S&P 500 index, according to Daniel Hemel, a New York University law professor.

Step 4: Cash balance plans

Cash balance plans have taken off in recent years, mainly with smaller businesses.

There were 25,754 employers with cash balance plans in 2023, the most recent data available, up from 1,477 in 2001, according to FuturePlan by Ascensus, a plan administrator.

Cash balance plans aren't available at most companies, but they are a valuable perk for workers with access to them. They aren't subject to the restrictions on annual 401(k) contributions because they are technically pensions, with some features that resemble 401(k)s.

People who save the most in

them are typically business owners paid a share of the profits, such as partners in medical and law firms. In some of these plans, older higher-earners can put away as much as \$397,000 a year, though younger and lower-paid people have lower limits. In addition to saving in the cash balance plan, the business owners also often save up to the \$72,000 annual 401(k) contribution limit.

As with traditional 401(k)s and IRAs, cash balance plans allow users to defer paying income tax on saved income, paying the income tax upon withdrawal. That's an attractive proposition for anyone expecting to be in a lower tax bracket in retirement.

This year, the IRS allows people to accumulate up to about \$3.7 million in a cash balance plan by age 62, according to Dan Kravitz, cash balance senior sales director at FuturePlan by Ascensus.

When workers retire or change jobs, they typically roll their cash balance and 401(k) money into IRAs—creating some of those supersize accounts.

A Look at Generous 401(k) Plans in U.S.

By CELIA BERNHARDT AND SARAH NASSAUER

The tax benefits of putting money into a 401(k) are well known. But not all 401(k) plans are created equal.

Take Costco, for instance. Many thousands of the retailer's front-line, hourly workers have managed to amass more than \$1 million in their 401(k) accounts, thanks in part to a contribution that Costco makes whether or not the employees themselves are putting money in.

For employees with at least a year of service, Costco contributes an amount equivalent to 4% of their pay. That rises as employees accrue tenure, so workers who have been with Costco for 25 years or more receive a 9% contribution. The company also has a small match that allows employees to receive up to an additional \$500 annually if they contribute \$1,000.

For Costco, it's one of the ways, alongside inexpensive healthcare and higher-than-normal hourly wages, that it retains experienced employees. The company places a premium on low turnover, a strategy its founders believed would reduce the cost of training new hires and lead to better customer service.

Some companies go far and beyond, offering jealousy-inducing match rates to win over prime talent. Employers in specialized fields who want to stay neck-and-neck with their rivals often conduct

benchmark surveys to assess what kind of benefits are most attractive to their staff and what is offered by other companies.

Here's a look at other better-than-usual retirement benefits offered by employers across industries.

A high match rate

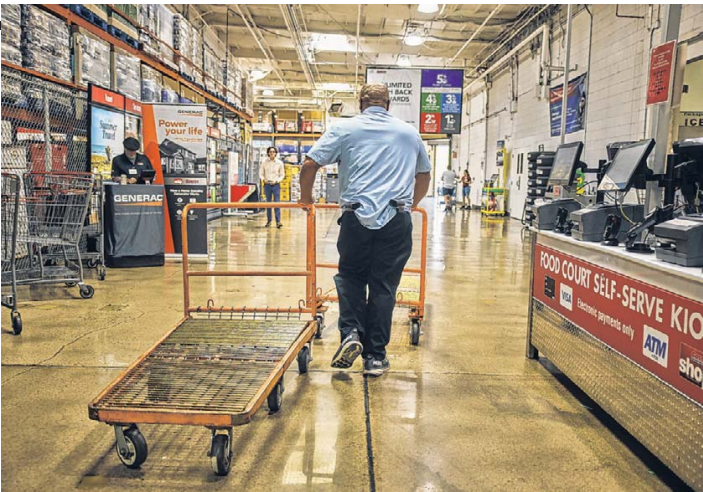
The average company 401(k) match is about 4.7% of eligible salary, according to a Vanguard analysis of plans it manages. Only 6% of those plans offered a promised matching contribution totaling 7% or above in 2025.

A select few employers hungry for talent go well beyond that. Southwest Airlines offered a dollar-for-dollar match of up to 9.3% of employees' salaries in 2024. Boeing boasts an even higher one of 10%.

Competing credit-card giants Visa and Mastercard offer better than a dollar-for-dollar match. Visa will put in \$2 for every \$1 that an employee deposits in their 401(k), up to the first 5% of their pay; Mastercard puts in \$1.67 for every \$1 on the first 6%. Both of those add up to a 10% total employer contribution, but employees don't need to put away as much in order to get it.

Although the most important number is that 10% total match, the warp speed matching rates are attractive, said Chris West, a managing director at human-resources consulting firm WTW.

"It's distinctive," West said. "It probably creates really strong incen-



tives for employees to contribute. It's also really easy to communicate."

Nonelective contributions

With a limited matching program, the strength of Costco's 401(k) lies in its nonelective—or nonmatching—contributions.

Nonmatching contributions are often structured as profit-sharing plans or, less commonly, as an employee stock ownership plan. Of the plans included in Vanguard's report, 37% used both matching and nonmatching contributions; 11% used solely the latter.

Tobacco company Altria Group matches employees up to 3%—but add that to its profit-sharing plan and workers get a 13% to 17% employer contribution in total. Aerospace Corp., a nonprofit government contractor, also uses a 3% match but provides a total of 12% for the longest-tenured employees through added nonelective contributions.

The practice is more common in

▲ Costco contributes equivalent of 4% pay to the 401(k)s of workers with at least a year of service.

some fields than others. Legal-services firms are disproportionately likely to opt for nonmatching contributions alone, according to Vanguard data.

Unionized workers at Ford and General Motors receive a 10% non-elective contribution as their retirement plan. The employer contributions were bumped up from 6.4% as part of contract negotiations in 2023. Both automakers transitioned away from offering pensions to new hires about two decades ago.

An employee stock ownership plan, a specialized retirement plan to which a company contributes shares of its stock, is often offered in combination with a 401(k). ESOPs are most common in sectors including manufacturing, construction and engineering. The structure

is thought to give workers a sense of investment in a company's success.

Publix, a Florida-based grocer, automatically provides employees with shares of the company's stock after they have clocked in 1,000 hours within a year and offers an option for them to purchase more.

Stewart's Shops, a regional gas and ice-cream chain in Vermont and upstate New York, operates an ESOP-only program in lieu of a 401(k). The company says its employees have seen retirement contributions of 17% on average in the past five years.

Publix and Stewart's both say that some of their cashiers have become millionaires through stock ownership. Stewart's puts the number at over 200.

Student-loan benefits

Boeing's benefits don't stop with a good match—it is among a growing group of employers that allow workers to receive matching contributions for some of their student-loan payments. A Boeing worker who puts 10% of their salary toward paying off a qualified loan will get a matching amount from the company in their 401(k).

It's a relatively new program launched after the passage of the federal Secure 2.0 Act in 2022. That bill expanded the features employers can include in their retirement plans. Among the other companies that have hopped on the bandwagon are Verizon, Chipotle, Comcast, Walgreens and News Corp, publisher of The Wall Street Journal

ELENA SCOTT/WSJ; ISTOCK

MATT MARTIAN FOR WSJ

PERSONAL JOURNAL.

BY NATALIE KAUFMAN

Niharika Abbaraju uses artificial intelligence in her work as a cancer researcher. But when she leaves the lab, the tool becomes her conversation coach. ChatGPT helps her draft pickup lines for dating apps and icebreakers for parties.

She'll even, at times, fire it up to formulate a response to the person standing next to her. When the conversation shifts to an unfamiliar book or article, for instance, Abbaraju will call up an AI summary. The vibe she's going for: "Like, I read sometimes," she says.

It isn't that Abbaraju can't think for herself, she says. AI just makes things smoother.

Abbaraju, 20 years old, is part of a growing cohort of young adults outsourcing deeply human tasks to AI. Many, struggling with social anxieties great or small, seek assistance ahead of a face-to-face encounter. Others let their bots script their text messages and even mediate their dating lives as a digital Cyrano de Bergerac.

Abbaraju and her peers will have to distinguish between productive use and unhealthy reliance, she says. In their quest to "optimize" everything with AI, she worries they're sacrificing what made the unscripted moments so meaningful.

"You need to still have those skills yourself in conversation and communication," she says. "You can use ChatGPT to help you build them, but not as 'Tell me what to say at every single moment in time when I'm with this person.'"

Mental-health professionals advise caution. The use of bots as social buffers points to an "epidemic of self-mistrust," they say. If you use AI to polish everything, you might lose faith in your own voice.

'Kind of creepy'

Andrea Wallace, a 24-year-old personal trainer in Austin, Texas, says bot-generated messages are appearing more in chats with ro-

Young Adults Now Let AI Do Their Talking

Using chatbots as a social buffer points to an 'epidemic of self-mistrust'



◀ Niharika Abbaraju, far left, uses ChatGPT to help her draft icebreakers for parties. Lucas Dvorak avoids AI when he texts his girlfriend.

and data science at Northwestern University.

It's a disservice to both parties, according to Ashleigh Golden, a clinical psychologist and adjunct clinical professor at Stanford University's School of Medicine. General-purpose chatbots were built for productivity, not relationships, she says. When people offload their communication to the tools, it can signal a lack of care to their recipients. It can also erode the sender's tolerance for uncertainty, she adds.

"If you're running a text past AI to check whether it sounds OK, you're kind of slowly teaching yourself that your own read can't

texts his girlfriend. During a talk on the subject, she told him it would be lazy and unromantic of him to treat their conversations as another task to be "hacked" with AI. Plus, she added, it's just plain weird. "She thinks it's kind of creepy, and I respect that," says Dvorak, who studies industrial engineering

mantic partners. Texts from a man her friend was seeing had been unwieldy. Suddenly, they took on perfect grammar and syntax.

"There is no way that this man who was struggling to type out 'there,' 'their' and 'they're' just sent this text message," Wallace says. Texts should be messy she adds, because the intimacy comes from informality.

And because chatbots cobble together sentences from patterns found in human language, AI messages have their own problematic telltales—clichés and stilted sentences. Lucas Dvorak, 22, uses AI all the time but steers clear of it when he



▶ Andrea Wallace is noticing more bot-generated messages in chats. Far right, Kalin Lincoln uses ChatGPT to check the tone of some of her emails.



be trusted," Golden says. That's especially problematic for the socially anxious. AI may help people avoid the sting of social missteps, but the relief is temporary, Golden says. The tool can become a crutch keeping people from trusting their own judgment.

A feelings processor

Faced with a personal issue at school, Kalin Lincoln used ChatGPT to tweak the tone of an "angry email" before sending it. She says processing her feelings first and then smoothing out the language teed her up for a more productive dialogue with the recipient.

Lincoln, 20, who studies food science at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, N.C., has gotten in the habit of using her chatbot to prepare for dates and tense confrontations. She drafts "note cards" that she then gut checks with her mom or a friend.

On one occasion, turning to the bot for help navigating an in-person chat with friends actually backfired on her. She says it told her the "opposite of what I needed to do."

Alexandra Friedman, a Seattle-based friendship and relationship coach, thinks it's OK to use AI to scaffold an uncomfortable conversation but not to lean on it throughout. AI is useful in crafting what to say, not *how* to say it, she says. That's something you have to cultivate without an intermediary.

Friedman advises limiting AI conversational role-play to once a week for recurring interactions, or to the day before a big event. She guides her clients to prompt AI to engage in the natural give-and-take of a conversation instead of asking it to generate a full script.

Chatbots can help unlock conversations someone with social anxiety might otherwise avoid, she says, but it's no substitute for real emotional regulation.

"Feeling uncomfortable is part of the human experience," she says. "That's something technology can never feel."



Britain's Hot Mic Engineer

Continued from Page One

"Initially people were like, 'Oh refreshing, no podium.' Then it was absolute fear that we weren't going to see Hot Podium Guy," says Paul Graham, 48, who works in marketing and has been a fan from the very start.

While prime ministerial resignations are often intense affairs, there is actually a lot of waiting around as the press gathers in Downing Street. Live images of an empty London street are beamed across the globe for long stretches, leaving viewers to turn their attention to other subjects: the country's favorite No. 10 resident, Larry the Cat, say, or whether the audiovisual crew is ripped.

Gough caught the public's attention in 2019, when ahead of the resignation of Theresa May, viewers noticed the buff man behind the mic.

Wearing a black T-shirt and skinny black jeans was meant to help Gough melt into the background. But naturally tall, with brown hair, a five o'clock shadow and muscular arms, he inevitably stood out.

"He is objectively great to look at, right? You can't deny it," said Lauren McEvatt, a former Conservative special adviser to the government. "But he's a product of everybody being too profoundly online with not enough to talk about."

Hot Podium Guy exists "in the period between knowing something is going to happen and it actually happening," she added.

Gough, who works for media and live-event company MGI London, politely declined to comment. "Given the nature of my business and its relationships within the industry, I wouldn't want to compromise my professional obligations," he said.

In 2019 he told the Daily Mail that he was flattered by the attention but didn't consider himself to be male-model material. "My best days may be well behind me," he said.

Those who have seen Gough live in action have only good things to say. Daily Express political correspondent Aaron Newbury said the technician appears to have taken the attention in stride. "He's an incredibly professional guy," Newbury said.

Burnham's team decided to do away with the wooden podium, opting for the new prime minister to give his remarks without any notes, to

▲ Tobias Gough has been the one constant amid Britain's revolving door of leadership.

signify a break with the past. It also had the potential to break Britain's heart.

As press cameras set up across from No. 10, waiting for the prime minister to arrive after his meeting with King Charles, fears circulated about the professional future of Hot Podium Guy—and, by association, Burnham. "No 'hot podium guy'?! I'm already fed up with the Burnham administration and it's not even started yet!," one person wrote on X.

Soon, a familiar outline appeared. Gough, in his signature black T-shirt, was walking down Downing Street.

"Yes! First sighting of Hot Podium Guy," an exultant fan wrote on X.

Following Burnham's podium-free speech some online called for an emergency rebrand to "Hot Mic Guy."

Some have questioned whether it's sexist to brand Gough "Hot Podium Guy," noting that "Hot Podium Woman" wouldn't get the same reception. So far, it hasn't dented the internet.

"As long as every single newspaper in the known universe is still commenting on what female politicians wear...I'm allowed to objectify the AV guy," said McEvatt.

The podium is dead. Long live the Hot Podium Guy.

The WSJ Daily Crossword | Edited by Mike Shenk

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BIRD IS THE WORD | By Jay Silverman

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▶ Solve this puzzle online and discuss it at WSJ.com/Puzzles .			

Previous Puzzle's Solution

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COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: NORTHWESTERN PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES; MYAHNI NGUYEN; SHEA MORGAN PHOTOGRAPHY

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ARTS IN REVIEW



MUSIC REVIEW | MARK RICHARDSON

The Strokes’ High-Tech Reinvention

The band’s seventh album sharply departs from its alternative-rock sound, leaning heavily into vocal processing

New York rock band the Strokes had good timing with the release of its 2020 album, “The New Abnormal.” It had been seven years since the group had put out a new LP, so anticipation was high, and the title of the record and its fractured nature felt right during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. While it was a typically uneven set—only the Strokes’ first two albums have been tightly focused and stylistically coherent—critical reception was solid, and it eventually won a Grammy for best rock album. After another extended layoff, the group is back with its seventh studio collection, “Reality Awaits” (RCA/Cult), out now.

“The New Abnormal” had a handful of compact songs that channeled the band’s ultra-cool early influences—think arty garage-rock like the Velvet Underground, the Stooges and Television—but “Reality Awaits” leans into experimentation. As with its predecessor, Rick Rubin is back in the producer’s chair. Broadly speaking, he earned his reputation as a late-career guru by encouraging acts to focus on the basics—classic songwriting, unadorned arrangements. Here, he lets the band—especially Julian Casablancas, the outfit’s lead singer and creative engine—run wild. Most tracks feature a degree of pitch-

shifting vocal processing identified with the software AutoTune, and some of these take the effect to an extreme that fans of the group’s more traditional side will find off-putting.

“Psycho S—” is a bold opener with a vulgar title that lays out precisely what you are in for: dirge-like tempos, vague melody and Mr. Casablancas’s robotized voice, in which roughly 60% of the sound seems to be generated by a number-crunching machine. It also has a brief and effective guitar solo, a striking build and a dramatic climax with real pathos, even if the singer’s gothic lyrics are allusive and difficult to extract meaning from. So while the overall aesthetic will not be to everyone’s taste, there’s enough going on musically to hold interest.

The following “Dine N’Dash” confirms that this will be a very different album by the Strokes. It begins with Mr. Casablancas reminiscing about leaving a restaurant before the check comes, and then shifts to scenes of violence and gore. He sometimes phrases his lyrics with a strange, affected accent as if he’s audition-

ing for a part in a cheap remake of “Dracula,” and once again his gritty croon is chopped up into a fluttering electronic quiver.

Sometimes the lyrics on “Reality Awaits” are funny and self-aware, sometimes they hint at Mr. Casablancas’s deeper concerns,

sings over hectic guitar strums, and his trilling digital falsetto, warped to maximize irritation, makes clear that those days are far behind him. If he *had* made this kind of music long ago, the Strokes probably would never have headlined a festival, and would have been a niche indie concern admired by fans of cult acts such as Ween and Ariel Pink. That the track has an eerie and effective arrangement where guitarists Nick Valensi and Albert Hammond Jr. harmonize their lines makes the treatment of the singer’s voice stand out even further.

Just a few tracks depart from the slow tempos and warbling vocals, and their difference makes them sound more exciting than they might in isolation. “Going to Babble On” has a quicker pulse with guitars that chug, and its vibe has the melodic ease of the early-’80s pop style sometimes called yacht rock. The loose and catchy “Going Shopping” might seem a trifle in another context, but on this odd LP it’s disarming and funny, as Mr. Casablancas imagines life as an ordinary guy mak-

ing his way through the crowd on the way to the food court: “I’m at the mall and the song is bumpin’,” he sings before adding a line that hits like a playful punch in the arm from a buddy: “There goes my future wife in the little red jumpsuit.” The record concludes with “Tyrants of the Mellow Moon,” a final ode to AutoTune with a circular chord production and unusual synth textures.

For years, Mr. Casablancas has been making weird, tech-focused material in his side project the Voidz, and “Reality Awaits” shares qualities with that group’s 2024 album, “Like All Before You.” But this is easily the most bizarre record by the Strokes, and will prove challenging to those who would prefer that the group fly straight. For those less invested in any one vision of the Strokes, it’s enjoyable to hear the band sounding free and risking failure. In a year when so many major artists have seemed content to do their best to return to and extend what they imagine listeners love about their music—the Rolling Stones, Gracie Abrams, Noah Kahan—the Strokes’ willingness to sidestep its legacy makes “Reality Awaits” admirable and fascinating even though it rarely goes down easy.

Mr. Richardson is the Journal’s pop and rock music critic. Follow him on X @MarkRichardson.

JOHANN RASHID

TELEVISION REVIEW | JOHN ANDERSON

Love Shack Or Blood Shack?

IMAGINE “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” with automatic weapons, or “The Honeymooners” with an actual moon shot, and you’ll still be underestimating the domestic rancor of the horror-comedy “Over Your Dead Body.” Dan and Lisa Burton (Jason Segel, Samara Weaving) are headed to the proverbial cabin on the lake, each with the same weekend plan: Kill the spouse. The forecast calls for grim. Also, very funny.

Rather bloody, too, thanks to director Jorma Taccone’s extreme take on the gore-as-entertainment genre, although the entire project is elevated by the cast and the writing. The remarkable Ms. Weaving is a contender for Australian Scream Queen, but few would expect Mr. Segel, a Judd Apatow mainstay, to star in a splatter comedy. And yet, as written by the duo of Nick Kocher and Brian McElhaney and adapted from the Norwegian film “The Trip,” Mr. Segel’s role contains just the right amount of the male insecurity/anxiety at which he excels, here as a failed film director reduced to making pop-up ads, while married to an equally unsuccessful actress wife who holds him in contempt. The miracle everyone pulls off is making a poisonous rela-

tionship dryly hilarious, even if every civilized exchange eventually becomes a figurative frying pan flying through the air.

Dan’s scheme—you pick up on it right from the start—is to tell all their mutual friends that Lisa is planning a long hike into the woods that weekend, how dangerous it is, and how he wishes she wouldn’t go. Lisa, for her part, spreads some casual news about Dan “hunting.” Neither is a very accomplished assassin and some of the funniest material involves one or the other tied up in a chair, with one partner pointing a shotgun at the other, hiking and hunting having been abandoned because, after all, their plans are terrible.



It’s hard to pick a side between Dan and Lisa. She’s been sleeping with a fellow acting student. Dan’s the type who orders special red peppercorns from Ohio (huh?) and insists the garlic be sliced not minced. (“Yes! Chef!” Lisa bellows and salutes, the homage to “The Bear” being highly amusing.) The trick is that in addition to being accomplished comedians, Mr. Segel

and Ms. Weaving are also first-rate dramatic actors: Their hatred feels genuine, which only makes the jokes funnier. Here comes a spoiler, by the way: For all the violence they intend to inflict on each other, they’re amateurs at mayhem compared with the three psychopaths who plummet through the ceiling from the attic after a shotgun goes off. Two are escaped convicts Pete and Todd (Timothy Olyphant, Keith Jardine). The third is a seriously unhinged corrections officer, Allegra (Juliette Lewis), besotted with love for Pete and reminiscent of Ms. Lewis in “Natural Born Killers.” They’ve taken refuge in the

cabin. They can take only so much of Dan and Lisa.

It’s a pretty serious cast for a movie so blithe about violence and farcical humor; the gore escalates in step with the number of absurd situations, silly coincidences and blown chances of escape for Dan and Lisa. It must be mentioned that Paul Guilfoyle rides to the almost-rescue as Dan’s dad, in a sequence rife with gratuitous body parts, but the scene is wild—which at this point in the film is saying something. It’s a devilishly strategic move by director Taccone: Mr. Guilfoyle provides a rush of exhilarating wind through a movie that may have started to feel a little sticky, especially around the head wounds.

Over Your Dead Body
Friday, AMC+/Sundance Now

Mr. Anderson is the Journal’s TV critic.

Samara Weaving and Jason Segel, left, and Juliette Lewis, Ms. Weaving and Timothy Olyphant, above, in ‘Over Your Dead Body,’ directed by Jorma Taccone.

INDEPENDENT FILM COMPANY

OPINION

Hollywood’s Rule of Lawfare



BUSINESS WORLD
By Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

Unfortunately for David Ellison, his father is as rich as Larry Ellison, not as rich as Elon Musk. And still Mr. Musk had to be sued into completing his acquisition of Twitter, a fate that may yet befall Mr. Ellison’s faltering deal to buy the Warner Bros. studio and TV business and marry it with his smaller Paramount studio business.

What the two transactions really have in common: The acquirers positioned their acquisitions as instruments in the wars between Donald Trump and his enemies, between the camps of woke and MAGA. Mr. Musk framed his pursuit of Twitter in terms of principle—restoring free speech. But the furor over Twitter’s alleged role in 2016 and 2020 elections was hardly far from every mind.

Mr. Ellison cited no principle. He played up his connections to the Trump administration in a politicized appeal to Warner shareholders—they’d get a quicker, surer payout than if they went with rival bidder Netflix. He underlined his bona fides by re-making CBS News in a less woke direction. In a most suggestive way, he hired Makan Delrahim, the antitrust chief who sandbagged a deal for the same assets (the buyer then was AT&T) under the first Trump administra-

tion. The courts would eventually toss Mr. Delrahim’s bogus case, but not before the delay helped torpedo AT&T’s business strategy. Message to Warner shareholders: Go with Netflix and expect the same.

All this isn’t only grotesque in an America where you would hope regulatory approvals would be granted or denied on the merits. In a large irony, Mr. Delrahim’s disingenuous antitrust claims, which essentially pretended away the streaming revolution, have resurfaced even more idiotically nine years later to sandbag the deal he now champions. The reason is a play by 12 Democratic state attorneys general to thwart Warner-Paramount after it was approved by competition authorities in every relevant market in the world.

On one level, yes, what goes around has come around. Today’s attorneys general can’t really believe their antitrust claims. They notice, however, that the deal would bring together CNN and CBS News, never mind that news is financially a pimple and the last thing the Ellisons care about.

In liberal America, and especially California, where Attorney General Rob Bonta is leading the charge, the effort is read as fighting back against the MAGAization of the news as the midterms approach, however obvious it might be that the Ellisons’ incentives would change instantly when the deal closes—from seeking to cultivate Mr.

Trump to cultivating liberal Hollywood.

Nevertheless, a judge was impressed, or feigned to be, with an obviously disingenuous antitrust claim. There will likely be a trial. Laughably, it will turn on whether the two studios, both flailing and laid low by the streaming revolution, are merging to monopolize the two businesses that streaming has made least coveted, cable TV and theatrical film distribution.

Attorneys general wield antitrust law as a weapon against Trump and MAGA.

The court proceedings will be a sideshow to the real issue. The Ellisons are in a deep hole because of the price they paid in the bidding war with Netflix for the potentially promising Warner assets. The Ellisons also agreed to a “tickling fee” that will drive up the price by \$7 million a day if the deal doesn’t close by late September, which it likely won’t.

Thus the incentive for the attorneys general to bring a case and drag it out no matter how meritless.

In one way, the uber-politicization of this major Hollywood transaction is over-determined. It didn’t begin with Messrs. Trump and Delrahim’s crass treatment of the AT&T deal. It didn’t begin with President Obama’s bigfooting of a supposedly independent FCC

on behalf of Netflix in 2014, which I’m sure had no relation to the production deal he later signed with Netflix.

One factor has been the remarkable transformation of the once-inconspicuous state attorney general’s job. Starting in the late ’90s, holders began intruding themselves noisily into national hot-button debates, often in cahoots with their trial-bar donors.

Antitrust, to boot, has long been a politicized charade. Even so, California’s Mr. Bonta is kidding himself when he claims to be standing up for Hollywood jobs. Nothing can stop the tides of economic and technological change. Best for workers would be the regulatory quagmire ending quickly so the two studios can return to investing in content, ultimately the only way to pay down their debt and create jobs.

You’ll see what’s really driving Mr. Bonta and colleagues the day after Nov. 3, when they lose all interest in their case and hand it over to their lowliest interns.

Here’s one reason to regret an eroding rule of law: puny, short-term interests inserting themselves to undermine long-term risk-taking, which the Ellison deal certainly represents (and then some) as did the AT&T deal before it. The only good news for American capitalism: The U.S. experiment in liberty, individual rights and market freedom is likely to survive for now because the rest of the world is heading in the wrong direction even faster.

Trump Has a Point About the Smithsonian



POLITICS & IDEAS
By William A. Galston

Since the start of President Trump’s second term, the Smithsonian Institution has been in his sights. In March 2025, he issued an executive order, “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History,” that accused the Smithsonian of embracing a “divisive, race-centered ideology” that portrays American and Western values as “inherently harmful and oppressive.”

Pursuant to this order, the White House Domestic Policy Council this July 4 issued a 162-page report accusing the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History and its director, Anthea Hartig, of adopting an ideological framework that treats the American story as a “political instrument to divide, discredit, and discourage our citizens.” It criticized the Smithsonian’s leaders for “extreme political activism” that seeks to “transform our country.” The report sparked a congressional hearing in which Republicans predictably accused the museum of radical activism while Democrats predictably accused the administration of mounting a political witch hunt.

It is tempting to dismiss this episode as another skirmish in the partisan culture war. But that would be a mistake. A lesson from the administration’s assault on higher education is that while it was misguided in many ways, it exposed the weakness

of many elite universities when confronted with anti-semitism and disruptive protests and prompted some of them to change their policies. Similarly, the report on the Smithsonian exposed troubling facts that the museum should take seriously.

Ms. Hartig, who became director in 2019, has infused the National Museum of American History with a new sense of mission. In a November 2020 lecture, she said that one of her roles as she sees it is to connect “research and scholarship to activism and advocacy.” In another lecture, in February 2025, she said that “history as a practice . . . is for me a prime tool of social justice.” She begins many events with “land acknowledgments,” which endorse the proposition that America’s land was stolen from its original inhabitants. After she became director, the museum rewrote its mission as “empowering people to create a just and compassionate future” by exploring the past. Ms. Hartig has applied this perspective to political issues such as abortion, stating in the name of the museum that “a future without federally protected reproductive health care rights is not informed, just, or compassionate.”

The museum in 2021 adopted an “Interpretive Plan” to guide its work. “Whatever the topic,” it declares, “we ask questions that speak to the core issues of our time.” The core issues listed include “race and identity,” “gender and sexuality,” “environmental change,” “immigration and migrations” and “economic in-

equality.” Throughout its work, the museum asks: “How have people come together to make change?”

These statements reflect an understanding of American history as a series of social movements. That’s part of the story, no doubt, but not the totality. It leaves out the role of leaders and political institutions and most of the issues that suffused the Constitutional Convention and the Federalist Papers. Questions of war and peace disappear.

Its American history museum has become an instrument of left-wing culture warriors.

The framework assumes that the issues now preoccupying culture warriors have always dominated our society and our politics.

According to the Domestic Policy Council report, the year Ms. Hartig became director, the museum started holding staff meetings to read and discuss the “Museums as a Site for Social Action Tool Kit,” a road map for transforming the museum “that privileges dominant Western ideals of race, class, and gender” and is linked with “white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, abuse of labor, colonization, imperialist theft of art and artifacts, . . . structural racism and other oppressions.”

One need not be a supporter of the Trump administration to wonder whether this sort of thinking should

play any role in taxpayer-funded institutions. The public deserves to know the extent (if any) to which these ideas influence the museum’s exhibits.

The museum’s pre-K-12 educational programs raise similar doubts. According to the report, the director of these programs, Orlando Serrano Jr., has said that before coming to the museum, he made his ninth-grade classroom a place that was “informed by thinking that confronts coloniality.” He said he believes that the museum should “move towards re-Maorification or re-indigenosation,” which would involve giving land and power back to indigenous peoples. Some of his writing suggests that he sympathizes with the movement for “transformative justice,” which aims for the abolition of police, prisons and immigration enforcement, and these ideas have influenced the educational materials prepared and disseminated under his leadership.

Mr. Trump last Friday issued an executive order directing the posting of signs outside the museum to alert the public that it doesn’t accurately present American history. This is a politicized farce, but behind it lie troubling questions that today’s polarized Congress is unable to explore seriously. Instead, a nonpartisan, nongovernmental commission should conduct an impartial inquiry into the museum’s ideology and activities. After all, the Smithsonian is a national institution that is funded by, and purports to represent, the American people.

BOOKSHELF | By Sally Satel

Delusion’s Chemical Source

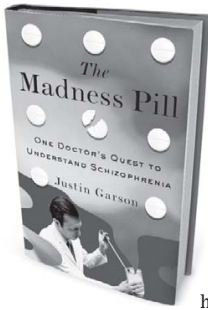
The Madness Pill

By Justin Garson
St. Martin’s, 240 pages, \$30

Well into the 1950s, many psychiatrists regarded schizophrenia—a mental illness with myriad symptoms that range from full-blown psychosis to disordered thought and social withdrawal—as an incurable manifestation of the patient’s unconscious conflicts, childhood trauma and stalled mental development. That view was challenged by scientists who investigated the biology of psychotic thinking. As Justin Garson writes in “The Madness Pill: One Doctor’s Quest to Understand Schizophrenia,” the effect on psychiatry was like “the Copernican revolution in physics.” The debilitating onset of psychosis was “no longer the start of an inner journey. . . . It was a brain disease.”

Among the medical pioneers responsible for the breakthrough was Solomon H. Snyder. As a college student in the late 1950s he’d been inspired to become a psychiatrist after reading Sigmund Freud’s work. But he soon became disillusioned with the psychodynamic account of mental illness advanced by Freudians and looked instead to the brain’s chemistry for answers.

His dedicated interest in schizophrenia began while he was a medical student at Georgetown in the early 1960s and grew during his time as a researcher at the National Institutes of Health. By 1970, as a professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Dr. Snyder had devoted himself to identifying the brain receptor for the neurotransmitter dopamine. His pursuit of the biological basis of schizophrenia—and his quest for a pharmaceutical treat-



ment for the disease—is the subject of Mr. Garson’s engaging scientific biography.

Dr. Snyder began by weaving together evidentiary strands collected by other investigators in the 1950s and ’60s. Among the most important came from Arvid Carlsson’s work establishing dopamine as a major neurotransmitter. Another was the discovery that Thorazine, the first antipsychotic medication administered to schizophrenic patients, had been shown to block dopamine activity—and, in so doing, melted away delusions and hallucinations.

Around the same time, Mr. Garson explains, researchers identified “amphetamine psychosis” in habitual users of stimulants—and in humans and animals given amphetamines in the laboratory. Many of its symptoms were virtually identical to the delusions of paranoid schizophrenia. Scientists noted, too, that amphetamine bore a chemical resemblance to dopamine, adding further weight to the connection between dopamine and schizophrenia.

Drawing on these findings, Dr. Snyder hypothesized that naturally occurring psychotic episodes were likely caused by high dopamine levels in the brain. But how did dopamine exert its effect? The answer, discovered in 1975 by Dr. Snyder and one of his graduate students, Candace Pert, was a cellular site—a receptor—to which dopamine attached. Effective antipsychotic medications, they argued, were those that blocked these dopamine receptors.

Psychiatry’s embrace of Dr. Snyder’s finding was foreshadowed by a convergence of pre-existing forces. “Psychiatrists were fed up with psychoanalysis and longed to be seen as part of a valid medical profession,” Mr. Garson writes. “Patients were tired of being told that their debilitating psychological problems . . . were caused by childhood traumas or bad parenting.” The pharmaceutical industry, meanwhile, was eager to create “the next blockbuster drug, something on the order of Thorazine and Valium.”

Mr. Garson makes the case that Dr. Snyder’s research into dopamine and mental illness “sculpted science’s overarching understanding of how such drugs work.” His findings would eventually pave the way for new types of psychopharmaceuticals, including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), such as Prozac (fluoxetine), as well as second-generation antipsychotic drugs.

To Dr. Snyder’s credit, his concerns went beyond the molecular. As a psychiatrist, he was mindful of the whole person who was suffering—not merely a disordered brain. This compassionate perspective runs through his many books, including “The Troubled Mind: A Guide to Release From Distress” (1976), in which he presented psychological strategies for coping with depression and anxiety.

Dr. Solomon Snyder sought to identify the brain receptor for dopamine. His research revolutionized the treatment of mental illness.

Now 87 years old, Dr. Snyder is a professor emeritus at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. “The Madness Pill” is a vivid and affectionate tribute to a brilliant scientist, though, the author writes, one who “is almost unknown outside of scientific circles.” Mr. Garson, a professor of philosophy at the City University of New York, has written previously on mental illness, and the opening pages tell us why the topic captivated him. When Mr. Garson’s father, John, was working as a trade lawyer in the Nixon administration, John became convinced that the Washington Post was reporting on his activity—through coded references he believed he could spot in the paper.

The elder Garson’s initial delusions resolved, but later returned and were treated with antipsychotic medications. These subdued the psychosis but produced a mental fog that affected his ability to work and demoralized him profoundly. Side effects caused difficulty in motor control and swallowing. “But the voices were gone,” Mr. Garson reports. “His doctors considered his treatment a success.”

While Dr. Snyder’s dopamine hypothesis was a scientific milestone, it turned out to be incomplete. We now know that additional neurotransmitters are involved in schizophrenia. Most scientists today view it as a neurodevelopmental disorder, and clinicians debate whether the protean manifestations of schizophrenia are all part of a discrete biological phenomenon.

Medications that target dopamine receptors offer hope to many suffering from psychotic disorders, but there are serious limits. As many as 30% of current schizophrenic patients derive little benefit from antipsychotic medication. What’s more, we cannot yet prevent schizophrenia or offer patients drugs that don’t produce side effects such as agitation, weight gain and tremors.

Despite these sobering realities, “The Madness Pill” is a celebration of scientific genius and a salute to the wild complexity of the brain. It is also a powerful reminder of the ordeal of serious mental illness and the ever-pressing need to find better drugs to treat it.

Dr. Satel is a psychiatrist, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a lecturer at Yale University School of Medicine.

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The FDA Deep State Strikes Back

The Food and Drug Administration bureaucracy can be as combative and entrenched as any in Washington. This week the agency is trying to sink promising new therapies for late-stage melanoma and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. President Trump pushed out Marty Makary and his deputy Vinay Prasad this spring in large part because they had scuttled treatments for life-threatening and rare diseases. We’ve chronicled over the past year how the agency repeatedly moved the goal posts for approving treatments and nit-picked trial results. The FDA under acting Commissioner Kyle Diamantas in recent months appeared to be turning around. The agency is reconsidering many treatments rejected by the previous regime and has scheduled public hearings with outside experts to review medicines. Alas, it now appears that FDA bureaucrats who share Dr. Prasad’s hostility toward innovative treatments are digging in.

Staff twist reviews to kill therapies for melanoma and muscular dystrophy.

The FDA this week released briefing documents prepared by staff ahead of advisory meetings for Replimune’s melanoma immunotherapy (Thursday) and Capricor Therapeutics’s cell therapy for Duchenne (Wednesday) that resurrect the agency’s specious reasons for previously rejecting the treatments. This is a nasty effort to influence the outside experts, many of whom aren’t intimately familiar with the treatments or diseases. Consider Replimune’s RP1, which the agency’s original review panel recommended for approval after its trial showed that a third of metastatic patients who received the treatment after the cancer progressed on other immunotherapies went into remission. Tumors vanished in one of six. Melanoma specialists heralded the results as unprecedented. Yet Dr. Prasad overruled the staff. When his rejection sparked an uproar among patients and physicians, he selected a new staff panel for political cover. No surprise, the panel agreed with him and concocted pretexts to kill the treatment—for instance, the staff opined that maybe biopsies had zapped the tumors. If only biopsies had such miraculous effects. This week’s briefing document repeats such absurdities and manipulates the data to claim the drug doesn’t work. Staff excluded from the efficacy calculation patients who had RP1 injected in all of their tumors, but only from the numerator and not denominator. This arithmetic trick reduced RP1’s response rate from 33.6% to 15.7%. The staff acknowledged that patients who

received and benefited from RP1 lived a median of 30.6 months without cancer progressing, versus 4.4 months on their prior immunotherapy. You don’t need a high school diploma to discern this as a treatment benefit. Yet the FDA said it “found this comparison to be uninterpretable.” About half of patients with metastatic melanoma will get worse on first-line immunotherapies within a year, at which point they have scant options. That doesn’t concern FDA staffers who persist in their insistence that Replimune should have run a randomized controlled trial that would have taken years and been unethical because some desperate patients would have received a placebo. Meanwhile, the agency last summer scuttled Capricor’s treatment for patients with advanced Duchenne muscular dystrophy because it claimed its randomized control trial for patients was too small to determine definitively that the treatment worked. Capricor resubmitted its application in February with results from a larger placebo-controlled trial of mostly wheelchair-bound boys. This trial showed the treatment slowed decline in patients’ ability to use their arms by 54% and weakening of their cardiac muscles by 91%. The staff accused Capricor of twisting the data. The FDA claims Capricor changed the methodology for its planned statistical analysis after the trial began, so its results should be ignored. Capricor says it adjusted the methodology after expanding the number of patients in its trial based on feedback it had earlier received from the FDA. Capricor also says it revised the methodology before “unblinding” patients and knowing the trial results. Never mind—the FDA claims patients in the trial weren’t truly blinded because side effects would have caused them to suspect they were receiving a placebo. FDA says this would somehow have resulted in less cardiac atrophy on MRIs. Really? The company last year complained that it was blindsided by the FDA rejection after having followed the agency’s guidance. Is the bureaucracy retaliating now because the company spoke out? The FDA has long had a bureaucratic culture of control that doesn’t abide public criticism. Dr. Prasad made it worse by driving out division leaders and staffers who didn’t share his anti-industry dogmatism. The result is a leadership vacuum. We hope the experts this week aren’t swayed by the bureaucracy’s kill shots, which underscore why the FDA needs permanent leaders who share the President’s right-to-try principles.

The Lindsey Graham Example

Tuesday’s memorial ceremonies for Sen. Lindsey Graham were a rare moment of amity in today’s bitter politics of Washington. The South Carolina Republican was celebrated for his sense of humor, his bipartisan engagement, and for being at the center of the political action. “For more than 30 years, nothing of consequence happened in this capital without Lindsey Graham knowing about it. No bill became law without Lindsey Graham having a say in it,” President Trump said about his friend in his fitting eulogy. “He was a man who gave America the full measure of his good and mighty heart until that heart itself just gave out.” Graham was all of those things. He was in that sense a politician in the best sense of the word—engaged in the debates of the day, passionate in making a difference with the power he had. He cared about using that power, not merely keeping it. But his memory shouldn’t pass without re-

Will anyone take his place as an advocate for U.S. principles abroad?

calling the principles he fought for. Above all, he believed that America is a force for good in the world. Perhaps in part because of his time overseas in the Air Force, he believed U.S. military, economic and diplomatic power could be marshaled to expand freedom in the world in the American national interest. In that cause, he was crucial to the defense of Ukraine against Russia’s marauding, and Israel against Iran and its terrorist proxy militias. There aren’t many current U.S. Senators who would draw the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of Ukraine to their memorial services. It’s a shame Graham didn’t live to see his Russia sanctions bill pass the Senate, or see Israel and Saudi Arabia normalize relations, two of his great causes. Graham quipped in his final days that he couldn’t die now because he was close to achieving both goals. At the current fraught moment, the country needs men and women like Lindsey Graham to step forward. Any volunteers?

The Talc Jackpot Tort Turnaround

Plaintiff lawyers bank on aggressive tactics to force companies into settlements and ever-bigger paydays. But kudos to Johnson & Johnson, which fought the tort bar and will likely settle talc lawsuits for billions of dollars less than it offered a few years ago. The shame is that it has to pay at all. J&J said Monday it has agreed to settle the remaining suits accusing the company’s talcum powder of causing ovarian cancer. The company has offered to pay \$5.5 billion to cover some 76,000 claims, nearly all the remaining cases in federal multi-district litigation and related cases in state courts. The agreement depends on the participation of 95% of the remaining plaintiffs, J&J says. The cases are a textbook attempt at jackpot injustice. Tens of thousands of plaintiffs lined up to sue, though science hasn’t proven a causal link between talc products and cancer. J&J fought the charges in court and mostly won. Of 20 individual ovarian cases the company litigated to a verdict, it lost one. In 17 cases J&J either won, earned a mistrial, or had the verdict reversed on appeal. Two cases are on appeal. But the management burden and financial uncertainty of litigating so many cases at trial is high. J&J tried to resolve the claims by giving them to a subsidiary, which would then file for

Johnson & Johnson fought the plaintiffs bar on its junk lawsuits.

bankruptcy, while providing more than \$8 billion in a trust to pay the tens of thousands of plaintiffs. But a court rejected the deal on grounds that if the entity could fund the trust, it wasn’t really bankrupt. The company also fought Beasley Allen when the plaintiff firm hired a former J&J outside counsel to consult on the litigation, despite his access to privileged information. Federal magistrate judge Rukhsanah Singh disqualified the firm in March for the conflict of interest. Courts in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois and Florida did the same. The plaintiffs suffered another setback last week when two expert witnesses in court said they couldn’t say for sure that talc caused ovarian cancer. “If such uncertainty is indeed reality, then how can any plaintiff here meet her burden on the merits of her claim?” Judge Singh wrote. The litigation has dragged on for more than a dozen years, with millions of dollars in litigation costs and countless hours of court time. No resolution is perfect, and the deal will still buy more yachts for the rapacious lawyers. But if the agreement passes muster in court, it will let J&J move on from endless legal costs and the uncertainty of jackpot jury verdicts to providing health products for American consumers. The lesson for other companies is that the trial bar can be defeated.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No One Is Killing Anyone for Their Organs

We commend Mary Marslender for her dedicated advocacy on behalf of patients with disabilities. As physicians working every day in the organ donation and transplantation field, we must affirm that while her op-ed “Can We Kill You for Your Organs, Please” (July 21) raises important questions about a hypothetical medical practice called “death via organ donation,” it is nothing more than that: a hypothetical that is strictly illegal in the U.S. Our field’s foundational laws, regulatory guidelines and ethical mandates stipulate that organ donation must never influence or interfere with the degree or timing of one’s medical care. This safeguard is reinforced by the Dead Donor Rule, the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ Hospital Conditions of Participation among other legal and ethical protections. “Death via organ donation” directly contradicts this principle, which is why it remains a concept that exists solely in the realm of academic exploration. We are concerned, however, by the real-world impact such discussions can have unless we go to great lengths to distinguish theory from practice. The entire organ donation and transplantation system ultimately relies on one fragile resource: public trust. Even headlines like “Can We Kill

You For Your Organs, Please?” can inadvertently sow significant concern and mistrust among the public and lead to fewer registered donors. This has a direct impact on the more than 100,000 patients currently awaiting lifesaving transplants, whose lives depend on Americans saying “yes” to organ donation. We encourage all readers to speak with their physicians, their local organ procurement organizations and their families about organ donation. We regularly meet families who are surprised to learn of their loved one’s decision to be an organ donor, and while these interactions are overwhelmingly positive, your decision shouldn’t be a secret. Clear communication is needed to ensure the continued advancement of this lifesaving act—whether it be between family members or in the national media. Trust is hard to gain but easy to lose. When we conflate theory and practice, especially in sensitive conversations about end-of-life decisions, we risk misinforming the public on the robust and effective safeguards in place that ensure the autonomy and well-being of donor heroes are always upheld. STEPHANIE POUCH, M.D., MS Atlanta CHARLES STROM, M.D. Waltham, Mass.

Genocide Scholarship Doesn’t Prelude Violence

Adam Louis-Klein’s op-ed “Rwanda, Israel and the Inversion of ‘Genocide’” (July 23) misrepresents the Journal of Genocide Research, its editors and the scholars whose work it publishes. Mr. Louis-Klein portrays the Journal as lying at the center of a “network of academics” that drives an “academic framework” that casts Israel as a “settler colonial” state committing genocide against Palestinians. The op-ed’s subtitle refers to us as “Hamas defenders” and Mr. Louis-Klein portrays this academic network as influencing such nonprofits as Amnesty International and B’Tselem to accuse Israel of genocide. This sort of academic framing, he argues, provides a “well-recognized prelude to violence” against Israelis. These allegations are false and offensive. The Journal prescribes no political or analytical framework. It publishes peer-reviewed scholarship on mass violence against civilians anywhere. Some contributors (several of whom

are Israeli) use a settler-colonial analysis; others do not. Publication in the Journal means only that an article is original, has met scholarly standards and been peer-reviewed; not that its analysis or conclusions are endorsed by the Journal’s editors. The fact that human-rights organizations globally and in Israel cite scholarly publications to support their arguments cannot be the basis for arguing the existence of an antisemitic conspiracy. Reasoned disagreement over international law, genocide and Israel-Palestine is legitimate. But labeling scholars as “Hamas defenders” whose thinking provides a “prelude to violence against Israelis” is not. A. DIRK MOSES Senior editor Journal of Genocide Research New York This letter is also signed by five other Journal of Genocide Research editors.

What ‘Guidance’ Can the Fed Really Offer?

The Federal Reserve’s failure to adequately contain inflation for multiple years running calls into question the view Alan S. Blinder expresses in his op-ed “The Federal Reserve Ain’t Broke, So Don’t Fix It” (July 25) that recent monetary policy has been successful. Mr. Blinder suggests that the Fed continue to offer guidance to financial markets with respect to the future course of short- and long-term interest rates—what’s referred to as “forward guidance.” That way market participants don’t have to guess what the central bank will do in the future. In reality, however, the 12 people who make up the Federal

Open Market Committee—able and well-intentioned as they are—are no more capable than the collective assessment of financial markets at predicting what will happen over the next year, let alone the next 10 years. For the Fed to try to steer long-term interest rates amounts to a form of price manipulation that distorts the efficient allocation of capital in financial markets and ends up depriving the central bank of a key input in determining where to set short-term interest rates. Fed Chairman Kevin Warsh is entirely on the right track to review how the central bank conducts monetary policy, including how it communicates its current policy stance. JERRY H. TEMPELMAN New York

It Isn’t a Netanyahu Problem

Regarding William A. Galston’s “Can Gadi Eisenkot Beat Netanyahu?” (Politics & Ideas, July 22): Mr. Eisenkot may or may not be able to win the upcoming Israeli elections, but one thing is absolutely certain: If he does, he will become the most reviled man in the Western world. His insistence on maintaining Israel’s status as the homeland of the world’s Jews and on ensuring universal recruitment to the Israel Defense Forces will mark him as a monster to the red-green alliance of the left and political Islam and its supposedly moral supporters. It isn’t really Benjamin Netanyahu that infuriates Israel’s critics, it’s Israel itself. STUART CREQUE Moraga, Calif.

Mr. Tempelman served as a senior financial and economic analyst with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York from 2006-08.

D.C. Was Already a State

Regarding your editorial “Abolish the Senate, Says the DSA” (July 27): All of this talk by the left about making the District of Columbia a state ignores history. Washington, D.C. originally included what is now Arlington County, Va., which was given back to Virginia in the 1840s. So rather than making a new state, give the land back to its origin state of Maryland. RONALD SMITH Boerne, Texas

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SPORTS

Major League Closers Are on Verge of Extinction

Once considered an essential piece of the bullpen, ninth-inning specialists are being replaced



The Rays’ Bryan Baker has emerged as one of the sport’s breakout performers.

By JARED DIAMOND

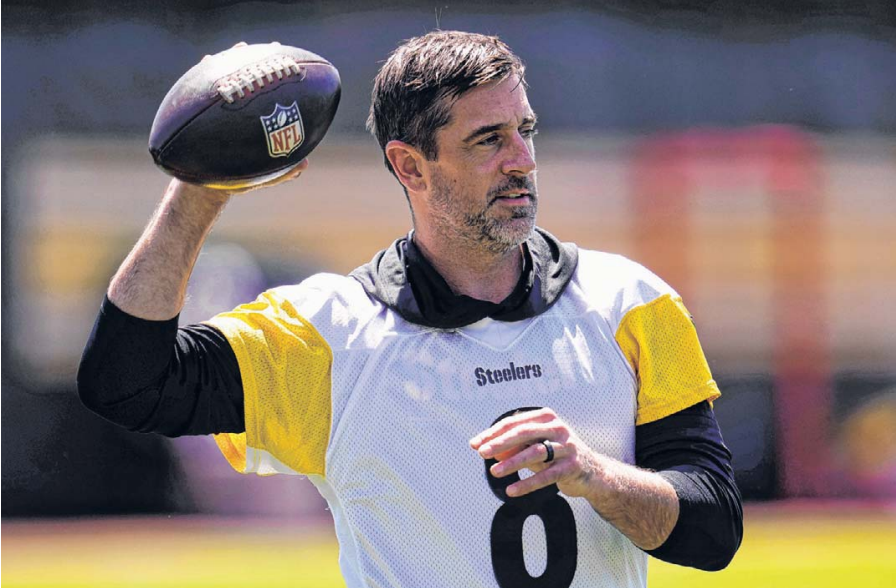
When Bryan Baker was growing up, the opening chords of Metallica’s “Enter Sandman” served as the soundtrack to October. That was the song that would blast over the Yankee Stadium sound system whenever Mariano Rivera emerged from the bullpen to put his opponents to sleep. During Rivera’s heyday, in the 2000s, just about every major-league team had a set closer whose sole job was to pitch the ninth inning. Those that didn’t were desperate to find one. They might not all have been as reliable as Rivera, but their role was abundantly clear: They were there to record the final three outs—and were paid handsomely for the service. “It feels old-school at this point,” Baker said. This year, Baker has emerged as one of the sport’s breakout performers in the closer role for the first-place Tampa Bay Rays. He has 28 saves and a 1.56 ERA, earning a spot on the All-Star roster for the first time at age 31. He also is part of a dying breed. The traditional closer, once one of the game’s most prestigious and well-compensated positions, has become an endangered species. Racking up buckets of saves

sent Billy Wagner and Trevor Hoffman to the Hall of Fame and turned flamethrowers like Mitch “Wild Thing” Williams and Eric “Game Over” Gagne into cult figures. They were superstars despite rarely throwing more than 20 pitches at a time. But modern front offices, armed with mountains of data, are increasingly comfortable constructing a roster without an established closer, instead relying on matchups to determine pitching assignments. The result is that 211 different pitchers have already picked up at least one save this year, or about 60 more than there were over the course of the entire season a decade ago. As recently as 2019, only 199 pitchers recorded a save—and the number has skyrocketed ever since, with 2026 set to surpass the record of 223 from 2024. “There are really not as many dominant ‘closer closers’ around anymore,” Philadelphia Phillies president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski said. That’s not to say that there are none. Dombrowski has one in Joao Duran. Veteran Aroldis Chapman remains a force for the Boston Red Sox. There has hardly been anyone in history more difficult to hit than the San Diego Padres’ Mason Miller. But even Miller acknowledges that “there’s a select group of guys that have that next level.” And clearly, you don’t need to

have one of them to win. The Los Angeles Dodgers stormed to the World Series last season with a bullpen that could generously be described as shaky. They responded by spending \$69 million to sign Edwin Díaz. He has been

injured for practically the entire season—and they’re still the best team in the major leagues. “It’s certainly not a need to be successful,” Miller said. “It’s a luxury.” Organizations are deploying

A Final Training Camp for a Four-Time NFL MVP



Steelers quarterback Aaron Rodgers said there is ‘zero debate’ that 2026 will be his final season.

Zidane Takes Over as France’s Coach After the World Cup

By JOSHUA ROBINSON

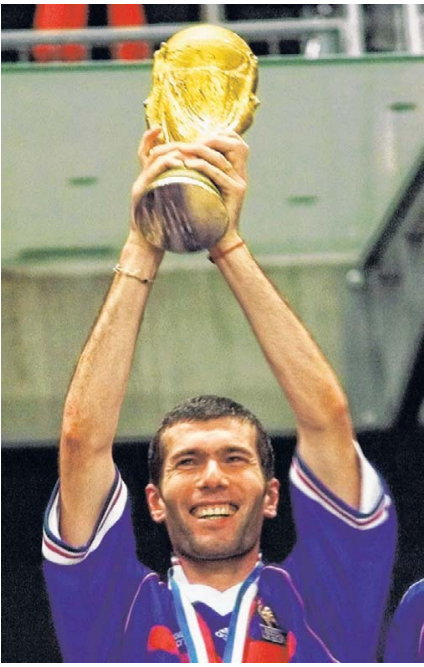
Paris
ZINÉDINE ZIDANE, one of the most decorated coaches in European soccer and greatest players of his generation, had sat on the sidelines for five years, waiting for precisely this job. Though he had won the Champions League three times with Real Madrid and two Spanish league titles, he refused every offer that came his way. The one gig he wanted was in the dugout of the French national team. “This was the only thing I wanted to do,” he said at his unveiling in Paris on Tuesday. Few athletes have ever embodied as many contradictions as the man France calls simply *Le Z*. A brilliant playmaker with Juventus and Real Madrid, among others, Zidane helped France win the 1998 World Cup by scoring two headers in the final against Brazil—and cost Les Bleus dearly in 2006, when he was sent off for head-butting an Italian defender. But the incident somehow made the moody, tortured, and quietly seething Zidane more beloved in France. With an image as one of soccer’s flawed geniuses, the 54-year-old had long been tipped as the man who could bring his country a third World Cup after the 14-year reign of his former midfield partner, Didier Des-

champs. Zidane now inherits a team that reached the semifinals of the World Cup and lit up the tournament with an attack that included Kylian Mbappé, Ousmane Dembélé,

Désiré Doué, and Michael Olise. But its glittering offense sputtered against eventual champion Spain, raising questions about who might make the most of Les Bleus’ billion-dollar offense for the Euro-

pean Championship in 2028 and the World Cup in Spain, Portugal, and Morocco in 2030. “You’ll see the style soon,” said Zidane, who signed a four-year contract. “I was a No. 10, what ex-

cites me is scoring goals...I was a leader on the pitch, and I’ll be a leader through what I’ve achieved.” Zidane’s impending arrival was one of the sport’s most open secrets. The French soccer federation first contacted him in early 2025, knowing that Deschamps would leave his post after this summer’s World Cup in North America. And on Tuesday, the headline in France’s sports daily *L’Equipe* was simply, “He Returns,” as though Wayne Gretzky were coaching Canada’s Olympic hockey team or Michael Jordan suddenly took over the Chicago Bulls. Even if France won its second World Cup eight years ago in Russia, French soccer remains in thrall to the generation that lifted the trophy for the first time in 1998. After Deschamps and Laurent Blanc, Zidane is the third consecutive member of that squad to take the top job. But unlike his more defensively-minded predecessors, who played successful but sometimes uninspiring soccer, Zidane promised to deliver a radically new style—beginning with the four international matches he will oversee this fall. “DD was DD,” he said, referring to Deschamps. “Laurent Blanc was Laurent Blanc. Zizou will be Zizou.”



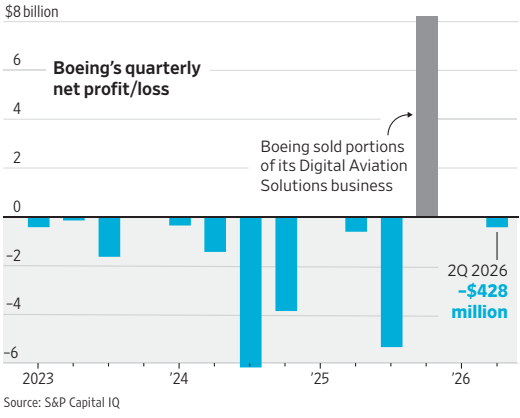
Zinedine Zidane, who won the World Cup as a player in 1998, left, is now set to take over as France’s coach, right.

CHRIS OWE/AP

GENE J. PUSKAS/AP

MICHEL EULER/AP; JUVEAU ALENISABACA/ZUMA PRESS

Boeing Spending Spree Continues



Second quarter loss narrowed amid push for Air Force One, and jet deliveries

By Drew FitzGerald

Boeing spent another quarter in the red as it poured more resources into developing presidential jets and accelerating production of commercial planes. The U.S. manufacturer said fast-tracking work on the modified 747-8 jets that will some day serve as Air Force One will cost an additional

\$280 million, the latest in a series of cost overruns on the more than \$4 billion project. Boeing's commercial airplane division also posted an operating loss, albeit a smaller one than in the same quarter last year. The business absorbed costs from ramping up its manufacturing operations in a bid to chip away at its multibillion-dollar backlog of undelivered planes. The results missed Wall Street's expectations for earnings, though not for revenue. Shares of Boeing rose nearly 5% in Tuesday trading. The company this month opened a production line in

Everett, Wash., meant to boost production of its workhorse 737 MAX jets. Boeing is aiming to make 47 of the narrow-body planes each month, up from 42 earlier this year. Increasing the production rate could boost the company's overall profitability by giving its commercial division stronger economies of scale. Boeing's overall second-quarter net loss of \$428 million narrowed from the \$612 million loss it posted a year earlier. Sales climbed 8% to *Please turn to page B5*

♦ FAA flags quality issue on MAX jet seats..... B5

Apple Launches Klarna Leasing Program

By Joseph De Avila

Apple launched a new product leasing program with Klarna that will allow customers to pay monthly for new devices and then return, upgrade or buy them. The program, dubbed Apple Upgrade, will offer 12- and 24-month leasing options for iPhone and Apple Watch, and 24- and 36-month terms for Mac and iPad. Klarna, the buy now, pay later company, will provide the leasing options. The announcement comes a month after Apple raised prices on some of its devices because of soaring memory and chip-storage costs. Leasing program prices start at \$17.99 a month for iPhone, \$11.99 for Apple Watch, \$24.99 for Mac and \$11.99 for iPad, Apple said Tuesday. At the end of the lease agreement, customers can return the product, get an upgrade or buy the product for a one-time fee. The leasing initiative replaces Apple's previous iPhone Upgrade program, which was limited to phones. The pricing structure is different, and could mean customers pay less each month. For instance, an iPhone 17 Pro previously cost \$57 a month for two years, with the customer owning the device at the end of the term. Now, customers can pay \$32 a month for two years for the same device, and then pay a one-time fee if they want to keep it. In the now-discontinued program, customers had to pay for AppleCare coverage. In the new program, purchasing AppleCare is optional. Shares of both the iPhone maker and Klarna increased Tuesday. John Ternus is set to take over from Tim Cook as Apple CEO on Sept. 1, just before the company is expected to announce a new foldable iPhone to compete with rival models already on the market. Cook warned last month that higher prices for iPhones would be inevitable due to the surging costs of memory and storage chips. Increased demand for memory and storage chips from artificial-intelligence companies has raised costs so much that Apple would have to raise device prices substantially to turn a profit. Apple last month raised Mac and iPad prices by \$200 or more on some models.

Missive Marks Shift By Luxury Billionaire

By Nick Kostov

PARIS—Bernard Arnault has spent decades carefully cultivating the image of some of the world's most sought after brands, from Louis Vuitton to Dior. Now the LVMH chief is changing tactics when it comes to his own. The billionaire published an acerbic open letter attacking one of France's top newspapers on Sunday, taking aim at a six-part examination of his political connections, media ownership and the question of who will eventually succeed him at the top of his luxury empire. On Monday, the 77-year-old took to social-media platform X for the first time to amplify his uncharacteristic missive. The burst of personal communication—which also includes a recent one-hour-and-41-minute appearance on a podcast about his life—marks an abrupt change of tone for Arnault. For much of his career, he has let his luxury empire speak for him, carefully sculpting his own public image through a handful of select interactions with the media. The new approach comes as Arnault has grown increasingly frustrated with how he and his family are being portrayed. He was furious about a recent series of articles about him and his business in Le Monde, according to people close to the businessman. The final installment, published Friday, described succession as “the poison at the heart of LVMH.” The newspaper series followed a recent French-language book that Arnault re- *Please turn to page B5*

Many Rent-Stabilized Apartments Go to New York's Wealthiest Tenants

By Rebecca Picciotto and Neil Mehta

Renting a Manhattan apartment for half the market rate while raking in a six-figure salary is urban legend for most New Yorkers. But it is reality for a small class of renters, thanks to the city's rent-stabilization law. The best housing deals in New York City happen to go to some of the wealthiest renters in the area, according to The Wall Street Journal's analysis of New York City's 2023 Housing and Vacancy Survey, the most recent figures. The top 25% of earners living in the city's rent-stabilized apartments pay \$1,000 less each month in median rent compared with market-rate units. That amounts to a 33% savings. The top 10% of earners save \$1,300, a 36% discount. Rent-stabilized tenants in the lowest three income quartiles, meanwhile, paid only about \$300 less compared with the market rate, saving between 15% and 22%. The savings for wealthy renters has long been an eccentricity of New York's rent-stabilization system, the largest in the country. Some of this gap is the result of market forces. Wealthy renters tend to live in more expensive neighborhoods where market prices are higher. So rent-stabilized housing in these areas tends to be significantly cheaper relative to the market rate, even while still being pricey for the average renter. “You do have people paying \$5,000, \$6,000, or \$8,000 for rent-stabilized apartments,” said Allia Mohamed, CEO of rental data firm Openigloo. Another part of this is by design. New York's system doesn't generally test for income status, so it isn't sup-

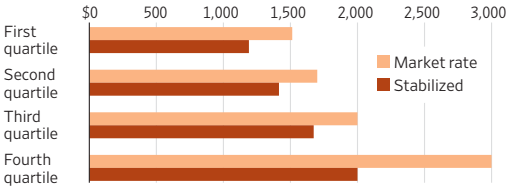


Wealthier rent-stabilized tenants tend to be in more expensive neighborhoods with higher market prices.

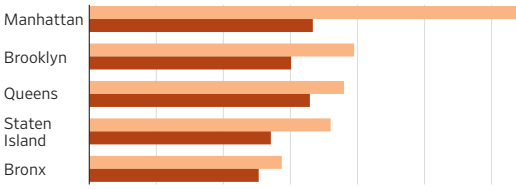
posed to weed out wealthy renters. “I can't imagine trying to do an income certification for like a million units,” said Brad Greenburg, executive director of New York University's Furman Center. “Administratively, it feels impossible.” These renters stand to benefit even more from Mayor Zohran Mamdani's rent freeze, which takes effect in October. The Journal's analysis showed median rents for Manhattan's rent-stabilized apartments are about half the market rate, while regulated units in the Bronx are 12% less. In Queens, rent-stabilized apartments were 13% lower and in Brooklyn, the discount was 24%. Some in the real-estate industry say that these regulated apartments should go to *Please turn to page B6*

♦ San Francisco ballpark site to become housing B6

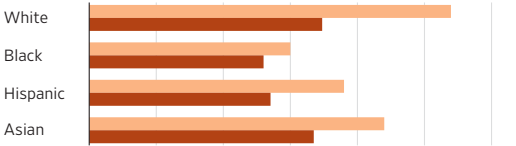
Median rent by rent type and income quartile



Median rent by rent type and borough



Median rent by rent type and race



Source: NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey

Lawsuits Pose Threats To Meta's Ambitions

By Erin Mulvaney and Meghan Bobrowsky

Meta Platforms is facing one of the most serious legal threats of its 22-year history—and it couldn't come at a worse time for the company as it navigates a tricky and costly transition to the artificial-intelligence era. In March, the company suffered defeats in court cases in California and New Mexico that accused it of giving priority to growth over the safety of its underage users. Thousands more lawsuits by individuals, school districts and more than 40 state attorneys general are pending in state and federal courts. Together, they could put the company on the hook for many billions of dollars in damages and weaken the federal protections that have historically shielded it from liability for harmful content on its platform. Meta is in the midst of a trial over claims by the attorney general of Tennessee, one of dozens of states that have said the company misled its users about the safety of its

platform. In August, Meta will go to trial in federal court in Oakland over claims from four attorneys general. In that litigation, the states have asked for damages of up to \$1.4 trillion—a sum nearly equivalent to Meta's \$1.5 trillion market to Meta's \$1.5 trillion market as a capitalization. Another trial in that consolidated set of cases is slated for February. Recent cases have brought mixed results. In May, Meta settled with a Kentucky school district ahead of a trial planned in Oakland. It notched a win this month after the teenage plaintiff in another case dropped his suit without receiving payment from Meta, after settling with co-defendants YouTube, Snap and TikTok. Meta said it would continue to fight “baseless” lawsuits, noting the plaintiff had created his account only six months before filing the suit. The lawsuits, which argue that social-media services are designed in ways that cause mental-health problems in young people, are getting in front of juries after working *Please turn to page B4*

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BUSINESS NEWS
UPS raises its outlook for the year as its restructuring push pays off. **B2**



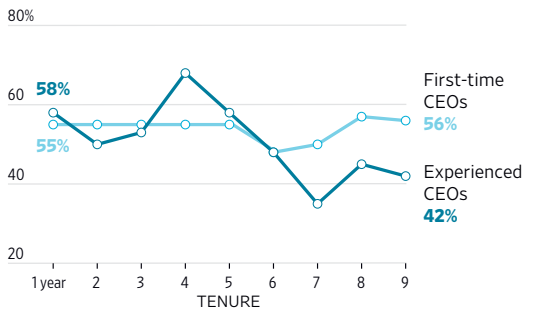
TECHNOLOGY
PayPal is open to a deal but remains focused on its turnaround efforts. **B4**

From Cracker Barrel to Boeing, Companies Tap Retired CEOs

By Chip Cutter and Heather Haddon

In January, a headhunter from search firm Spencer Stuart started calling restaurant industry executives with a proposition: Would you come to Cracker Barrel as the next CEO? Cracker Barrel's decision to select a 69-year-old former restaurant executive to lead the chain highlights the emerging practice of boards calling in retired chief executives from the sidelines to help engineer high-profile turnarounds. The family-dining chain's board and its current Gen X CEO had agreed that they would work together to look for her replacement after an uproar over branding changes caused the chain's sales to plunge, according to people familiar with the search. In recent years, Boeing, Verizon Communications and others have all chosen once-retired CEOs. An established executive brings instant credibility and experience to a role,

Share of CEOs outperforming the market by year of tenure



Note: Analysis of the entire tenures of 855 S&P 500 CEOs over a 20-year period. This includes 106 CEOs with prior public CEO experience and 749 first-time CEOs. Source: Spencer Stuart

governance specialists say, even if research suggests the performance of second-act CEOs tends to be mixed. For the executives themselves, returning to the corner office often holds appeal, allowing them to dig into new business problems—while enjoying the perks and power of running a large company again. “I'm not really sure there's

such a thing as a retired CEO in the U.S.,” said Matteo Tonello, head of data benchmarking and analytics at the Conference Board. “In this country, CEOs don't really retire, they just become professional directors.” Some, then, leave board work and move back into the top job. Cracker Barrel's new leader, *Please turn to page B5*

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Shein has also been the subject of an EU investigation.

Shein Discloses FTC Investigation

By Kelly Cloonan

The Federal Trade Commission is investigating Shein Group's U.S. business operations, according to the Singapore-based fast-fashion retailer. Shein, which was founded in China, disclosed the investigation in a filing related to its planned initial public offering in Hong Kong. The company didn't disclose what the FTC is investigating, or when the probe began. An FTC spokesperson confirmed the investigation but declined to provide further comment. Shein didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. In the filing, Shein said it is cooperating with the FTC's investigation. The company said there is a possibility it could reach a settlement with the FTC that could require it to make "significant monetary payments

that could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition." Shein added that it can't predict the outcome of the investigation, or the timing of the outcome. "We cannot rule out that such outcome could occur in the near term," the company said. The disclosure was included in filings with the Hong Kong stock exchange as the retailer gears up to go public after securing China's approval for a listing earlier this year. The company had previously targeted an IPO in the U.S., but its plan fell apart amid U.S. scrutiny of its supply chain and labor practices in China. Shein had also eyed a listing in London. Shein has also been the subject of an investigation by the EU over concerns about illegal products sold online and potential risks to users from the platform's design.

By Connor Hart

United Parcel Service is wrapping up a yearslong restructuring, which Chief Executive Carol Tomé says has structurally reset its operations. The company has removed billions of dollars worth of costs from the business, in part by phasing out roughly half of its lower-margin Amazon volumes and focusing instead on higher-quality shipments. UPS also has cut tens of thousands of delivery-driver and warehouse-worker roles.

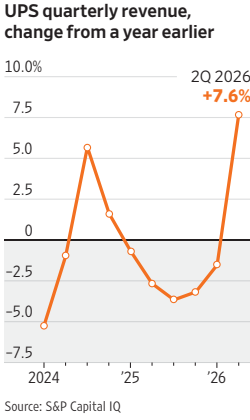
"We now have a leaner, more automated, more agile network that will deliver operating leverage as volume grows," Tomé said on a call with analysts Tuesday. UPS said its restructuring efforts are bearing fruit, lifting its outlook for the year after revenue climbed in the second quarter. Profit fell sharply, though, hurt by a large after-tax charge tied to the company's workforce-reduction initiatives, as well as higher fuel costs stemming from the war in the Middle East. Shares slid 6.5% to \$105.66 in Tuesday's trading.



The delivery company has eliminated billions in costs.

Looking ahead, UPS said it would focus on growing premium volumes, pivoting its core network strategy toward small and medium-size businesses, as well as healthcare and B2B customers. The company plans to continue investing in radio frequency identification, or RFID, technology. UPS is embedding RFID tags into shipping labels and installing RFID sensors on delivery trucks—moves it said will increase visibility throughout its small-package delivery network, while also improving delivery accuracy

and reducing the manual labor needed to scan individual parcels. "These capabilities are generating rich, real-time data about the packages in our network," Tomé said. UPS also continues to invest in artificial intelligence, she added, which can use that real-time data to optimize planning, routing and execution. For its three months ended June 30, UPS posted a profit of \$604 million, or 71 cents a share, down from \$1.28 billion, or \$1.51 a share, a year earlier.



Ford Lifts View Even After Sales Fall

By Ryan Felton

Ford Motor's revenue fell in the second quarter amid declining U.S. sales. The automaker is nonetheless upbeat about the auto industry. The Dearborn, Mich., company on Tuesday raised its full-year profit forecast and said it is confident Americans would continue to buy pricey, big pickup trucks and sport-utility vehicles that dominate its lineup. "We play only where we have real competitive advantage, or we can build one, and we're ruthless about where we put our money," said Ford Chief Executive Jim Farley in a call Tuesday with analysts. "Every dollar must earn durable returns and drive profitable growth." Ford shares were up 7% in after-hours trading following its second-quarter financial results Tuesday. The automaker raised its full-year outlook on earnings before interest and taxes to between \$10 billion and \$11 billion, up from \$8.5 billion to \$10.5 billion. Ford's sales in the first half of 2026 were down nearly 10% compared with a year prior. The automaker continues to recover from a supplier fire that affected pickup production while fewer Americans overall are buying new vehicles. Ford reported a second-quarter loss of \$1.33 billion, with costs largely tied to the end of a joint electric-vehicle battery venture with SK Group and other electric-vehicle program cancellations. Stripping out certain one-time items,



The carmaker expressed confidence Americans will continue to buy the big and pricey vehicles that dominate its lineup.

the company reported adjusted earnings of 42 cents a share. Analysts polled by FactSet were expecting adjusted earnings of 36 cents a share. Sherry House, Ford's finance chief, said buyers are gravitating to larger off-road SUV and truck variants, which accounted for nearly a quarter of the company's U.S. sales in the second quarter. "Our Ford consumer has been very resilient, despite inflation, despite what we're seeing in interest rates," House said. The automaker said Tuesday that the sales drop is primarily due to the discontinuation of higher-volume models like the Escape sport-utility vehicle and the supplier fire that undermined production of F-Series trucks. Revenue fell 4% in the second quarter, but is up slightly through June compared with a year prior. The automaker's stance on American car buyers is a

broader reflection of the auto market in recent years. Average transaction prices continue to hover around \$50,000. More than one million usual buyers have opted out of the new-car market, opting to buy used instead or to keep their existing vehicles running with maintenance. Still, high car prices have kept earnings steady. Ford is aiming to roll out cheaper options for customers, House said. The company is currently racing to prepare the launch of a new all-electric pickup in 2027. The truck, expected to start at \$30,000, will be the first of several affordable vehicles built on that platform, House said. "We think that we have what the customer wants and we also are focused on affordability," House said. "That is why we have our new Universal EV Platform." More broadly, U.S. car buy-

ers have been increasingly interested in more affordable options. Sales of cheaper subcompact sport-utility vehicles soared more than 23% last month compared with a year prior, according to industry-research firm Kelley Blue Book, while full-size pickups inched higher just 2.5%. While high gasoline prices remain a concern, House said the Iran war for now hasn't dented sales on the U.S. side. Analysts at Jefferies expected the second quarter to be a low point in sales volume for Ford, due to the fire involving aluminum supplier Novelis. Ford expects to make up for those lost sales. Its recent tie-up with Chinese carmaker Geely to boost production at a factory in Spain is also a positive development, Jefferies analyst Philippe Houchois said in a note. Ford's stock has rallied in recent months following the announcement of a new energy-storage subsidiary, Ford Energy. The new division will repurpose EV battery manufacturing capacity for stationary energy-storage systems designed for artificial-intelligence data centers and power utilities. Farley also addressed The Wall Street Journal's recent report that Ford secured a contract with the Department of Defense to build prototype tactical trucks. The Pentagon in recent months has asked U.S. automakers to increase their roles in the defense space and help boost weapons production. "Ford always answers the call to duty," Farley said.

Mercedes-Benz Lowers Guidance Amid Concerns in China

By Dominic Chopping

Mercedes-Benz cut its sales expectations for the year, becoming the latest automaker to warn of intensifying pressure in China as it booked a hefty impairment in the country that hit earnings at its main cars business. The German luxury-car maker now expects to sell slightly fewer cars this year than last, while group revenue is also expected to come in slightly below last year. Mercedes previously guided for flat unit sales and revenue. "In the Chinese premium and luxury segment, the ongoing intense price competition, especially by local manufacturers, is expected to lead to significantly weaker development of unit sales for many foreign manufacturers," Mercedes said. It booked a €704 million, or \$800.3 million, impairment in the second quarter related to its Chinese business, which saw earnings before interest and taxes in its cars business



The carmaker became the latest to warn of intensifying pressure in the Chinese market.

slump to €49 million from €783 million last year. Mercedes noted the impairment didn't result in a corresponding cash outflow. The company's car sales in China plunged 30%, offsetting

growth in all other regions, amid intense competition, cautious consumer sentiment and continuing model changes. Geopolitics and trade barriers also continue to cause uncertainty while the impact of

the Middle East conflict is exacerbating existing uncertainties. The company's guidance assumes that the war won't fully reignite in the second half of the year, Mercedes said.

Volkswagen and its Audi brand have both recently cut sales guidance for the year and pledged to deepen cost-saving measures as they grapple with the deteriorating Chinese market that has seen a surge in car launches from domestic brands this year and a prolonged price war as manufacturers vie for customers. BMW last month also downgraded its sales expectations for the year. However, Mercedes said it would sell a greater share of electric vehicles this year than expected as it backed its other guidance metrics, including for significantly higher Ebit and an adjusted return on sales in the car unit of 3% to 5%. The carmaker expects to benefit from the launch of over 40 new models in the years between 2025 and 2027 as well as its recent efforts to further intensify global productivity measures that are focusing on its German sites. Last year, the company

outlined plans to become more efficient through a series of measures that include job cuts and shifting some production from its German home to lower-cost countries such as Hungary. It also is working to lower energy costs, increase automation and decrease logistics expenses to cut the production cost of each vehicle. "Customer response to our new models is strong," Chief Executive Ola Kallenius said. "In the second half, we will focus on bringing more new models to customers while further improving our cost position and productivity." Mercedes reported second-quarter Ebit of €1.55 billion, up from €1.27 billion a year prior, as revenue declined 3.3% to €32.06 billion. Analysts polled by FactSet expected Ebit to come in at €1.51 billion on revenue of €31.88 billion. It reported an adjusted return on sales of 4% for its cars business, down from 5.1%.

BUSINESS & FINANCE

World Cup Ads Lift Coca-Cola’s Results

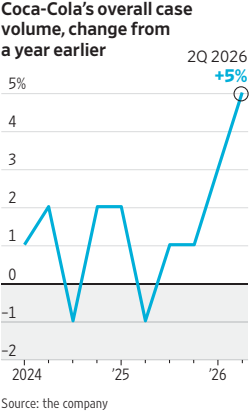
By KATHERINE HAMILTON

Coca-Cola boosted its earnings outlook after the company’s marketing efforts, including its World Cup campaign, helped drive volume despite consumer caution. The beverage conglomerate’s advertising efforts before and during soccer’s World Cup helped fuel a 5% increase in overall case volume in the second quarter. Executives said the growth came even as customers are worried about rising prices. “While the external environment remains uncertain, our strong first-half performance and business flexibility give us confidence,” Chief Financial Officer John Murphy told investors.

Coca-Cola said it expects adjusted earnings per share to increase 9% to 10% during the full year, up from previous guidance of 8% to 9% growth. Profit increased 16% to \$1.03 a share in the second quarter. Stripping out certain one-time items, adjusted per-share earnings were 97 cents, ahead of the 93 cents anticipated by analysts, according to FactSet. Revenue rose 7% to \$13.4 billion. Analysts surveyed by FactSet had forecast revenue of \$13.17 billion.

Coca-Cola shares closed up 5% on Tuesday on the news. The World Cup campaign was part of Coca-Cola’s attempts to focus on consumer needs, as many of its customers are feeling more concerned about prices.

Chief Executive Henrique Braun called the consumer landscape uneven, adding that low-income shoppers and customers in Latin America and China are especially pressured. “Many consumers face inflationary pressures, geopolitical uncertainty and economic challenges,” he said. “They are evaluating how they shop, what they value and what they want to put in their basket.”



The World Cup campaign boosted Powerade volume by 8% and Trademark Coca-Cola by 5% in the quarter.

The company has been raising prices, which helped drive revenue. Price and mix increased the most in North America, where it rose 4%, contributing to a 2% overall increase globally.

To address price-wary customers, Coca-Cola is adding products such as the mini can, which has an even lower price point than regularly sized bottles. Shoppers can now buy individual mini cans at convenience stores, which the company hopes will attract more budget-conscious customers.

Braun said he expects challenges to consumer spending to persist through the rest of the year. Still, he sees momentum building from Coca-Cola’s customer campaigns. During the World Cup, the company collected more than 25 million records on customers’ data, which it plans to use to inform future advertising.

“These insights give us a stronger foundation to better understand consumers, tailor our decisions and improve how we show up in the marketplace,” Braun said.

Visa Posts Revenue Increase, Plans to Cut Workforce by 7%

By KELLY CLOONAN

Visa logged higher revenue in its latest quarter as consumers continued to spend, even amid inflationary pressures. The payments company on Tuesday posted fiscal second-quarter revenue growth of 17%, topping Wall Street’s expectations. Chief Executive Ryan McInerney said consumer spending remained resilient in the quarter, and Visa saw particular strength in consumer payments, commercial and money movement solutions,

and value-added services.

The company also said it is cutting 2,600 jobs, or about 7% of its workforce, as it works to adapt to the rapidly changing payments industry.

In a memo to employees, McInerney said most of the roles affected would be in technology and product teams, but that there would be cuts across the organization. He said technology trends are creating “a once-in-lifetime inflection point in payments” that is changing how money moves around the world.

In the U.S., payments volume rose 8% in the quarter with broad-based spending improvement in both credit and debit, which the company attributed in part to higher tax refunds.

“Both discretionary and nondiscretionary spend remain strong. We do not see signs of the lower spend consumer weakening in our volumes,” Chief Financial Officer Chris Suh said on a call with analysts.

Overall, payments volume and processed transactions

both rose 9% from the year-ago quarter, while cross-border volumes gained 12%.

For the quarter, profit came in at \$6.02 billion, or \$3.14 a share, compared with \$4.58 billion, or \$2.32 a share, a year earlier. Revenue was \$11.23 billion, compared with analyst estimates of \$10.75 billion.

Visa also bumped up its revenue and profit outlook for the full year. Suh said the company expects consumer-spending stability to continue, despite near-term uncertainty tied to the conflict in the Middle East.

Unilever Raises Sales Growth Outlook

By AIMEE LOOK

Unilever bumped up its outlook for the year after quarterly sales volume growth surged to a more than 16-year high.

The consumer-goods giant’s underlying sales growth accelerated to 5.8% in the second quarter, driven by a 5.5% increase in volumes and a 0.2% rise in pricing. It was well above growth of 3.1% in the same period a year prior.

Underlying volume growth reached its highest point since the first quarter of 2010, when volumes grew 7.6%.

In its beauty and well-being segment, which houses brands like Dove soap and Vaseline jelly, underlying sales rose 8.1%. Its home-care segment, including the Cif brand, saw a rise of 9.1%. Volume growth led the jump in both segments.

Volume growth, an indicator of how well brands are able to withstand cash-strapped consumers tending to trade down to white-label brands, is at the forefront for consumer-goods companies at the moment.



The company is focusing on beauty and personal care.

London-based Unilever’s volumes accelerated in all categories in the second quarter except for foods, where underlying sales growth was up 0.2%. The result came ahead of a looming separation of the business.

“This was a very good quarter for Unilever, with even the bit that didn’t go well (food in Europe) playing into management’s decision to unload that business,” RBC Capital Markets analyst James

Edwardes Jones said in a note.

After a slow pivot away from foods over the past decade, Unilever is exiting foods by combining the business with the U.S. maker of spices and seasonings **McCormick**. It first sold its margarine and spreads brands to KKR, then spun off its ice-cream arm into Magnum Ice Cream.

The proposed combination of Unilever’s foods business with McCormick is expected

to close in 2027 and create a company valued at more than \$65 billion, including debt. The deal with U.S.-headquartered McCormick is part of Unilever’s broader strategy shift to focus on beauty, personal-care and home products.

As part of it, McCormick is catering toward Unilever’s heavy investor base in Europe through a London listing, which aims to facilitate capital flows and bolster liquidity for shareholders, according to the U.S. company. It plans to have international headquarters and keep a presence in the Netherlands, where Unilever has deep roots.

Also Tuesday, Unilever lifted its outlook for the year. It expects underlying sales growth within its 4% to 6% multiyear guidance, having previously anticipated it at the bottom end of the range.

Unilever said it now expects underlying volume growth around 3%, compared with an earlier expectation of at least 2% growth for the year.

Unilever shares closed up 8% in London trading.

FIFA Weighs Venture Stake Sale

By BEN GLICKMAN

FIFA, soccer’s highest governing body, is exploring raising more than \$4 billion by selling a stake in a new commercial venture.

The venture would be valued at around \$20 billion and house the group’s broadcast rights, sponsorship, ticketing and licensing businesses across men’s, women’s and youth soccer, FIFA said Tuesday. It said it is working with investment bankers at **JPMorgan** and advisers including OpenEconomics.

The new venture would allow FIFA to cash in on the surging popularity and revenue generated by organizing the world’s most watched sporting event, the World Cup. The organization said the proceeds would be distributed as funding for member organizations.



FIFA’s Gianni Infantino

Joshua Kushner’s investment firm Thrive Capital is expected to lead the proposed investor group through its Thrive Eternal holding company, FIFA said.

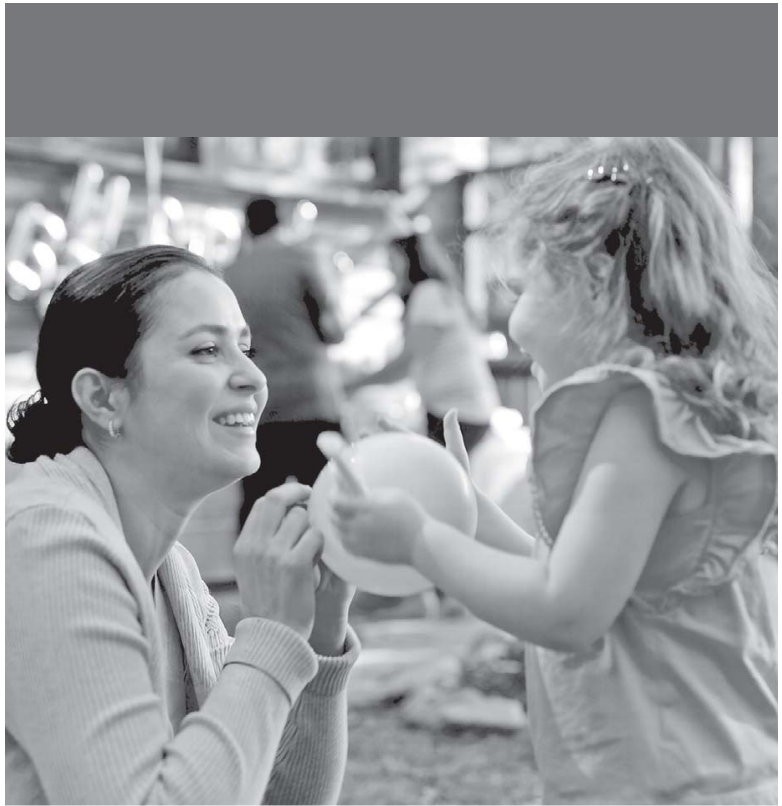
FIFA doesn’t have private

owners and has been led by FIFA President Gianni Infantino since 2016. He is running for re-election next year. The new commercial venture is still subject to approval by a majority of FIFA’s 211 member associations.

The reaction from UEFA, the governing body of European soccer—or football—was immediate.

“This crosses a line that football’s governing institutions should never cross,” the organization said. “The soul and governance of football are not assets to trade—especially with zero transparency as to who gains financially. None of us are the owners of football. It is not FIFA’s to sell.”

FIFA said it would retain control of the venture and still have exclusive authority over competitions, match calendars and all sporting decisions.



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HILTON WORLDWIDE

Revenue Increases On U.S. Demand

Hilton Worldwide posted higher second-quarter sales as renewed demand for mid-range hotels fuels revenue growth in the U.S.

Hilton’s U.S. business had the highest rate of revenue growth compared with other geographies. Luxury hotels in the U.S. did well, but it was midscale hotels that saw the biggest leap in demand, Chief Executive Christopher Nassetta told analysts Tuesday.

Nassetta sees the boom in artificial-intelligence development as a driver behind the resurgence in midscale hotels. He said the AI boom is attracting middle-income people, such as contractors and engineers, to stay temporarily in areas where data centers are being built.

Hilton’s profit for the quarter rose to \$482 million, or \$2.10 a share, compared with \$440 million, or \$1.84 a share, a year earlier.

Revenue rose 6.5% to \$3.34 billion. Revenue per available room increased 3.9% in the quarter.

—Katherine Hamilton

JETBLUE AIRWAYS

Loss Widens as Fuel Costs Bite

JetBlue Airways said Tuesday that the airline might seek incremental secured debt financing if fuel prices remain elevated.

Executives, on a quarterly earnings call, said the company has room to raise additional capital on the \$500 million aircraft-backed loan it obtained in April.

New York-based JetBlue recorded a bigger loss in the second quarter stemming from higher jet fuel prices, though it blunted about half of that damage with higher fares and strong customer demand.

The carrier posted a loss of \$247 million, or 66 cents a share, compared with a loss of \$74 million, or 21 cents a share, in the same quarter a year earlier. Analysts polled by FactSet had been expecting a slightly bigger loss of 69 cents a share.

Operating revenue rose 14.5% from a year earlier to \$2.7 billion, clearing analyst estimates for \$2.69 billion.

—Alexander Gladstone and Dean Seal

KERING

Gucci Owner Posts Higher Revenue

Kering reported an increase in revenue for the most recent quarter as the French luxury group works to restore the appeal of its brands, particularly Gucci.

The Paris-based company logged revenue of €3.65 billion, or \$4.15 billion, for the quarter through June. This was 1% higher than a year earlier in reported terms and up 2% excluding currency and portfolio changes. The result compares with the €3.63 billion expected by analysts, according to a Visible Alpha consensus.

The group’s crown jewel, Gucci, booked sales of €1.41 billion, down 3% on year in reported terms. Despite the decline, the company noted that the brand’s new collections continued to gain traction.

Sales from directly operated stores were still negative, recording a 2% decline on a comparable basis, but improved 7 percentage points compared with the previous three months.

—Andrea Figueras

TECHNOLOGY

PayPal Says It Is Open to a Potential Deal

However, company remains focused on turnaround; revenue rises 5% in quarter

By DEAN SEAL AND ELIAS SCHISGALL

PayPal bumped up its profitability forecast Tuesday and signaled an openness to a potential deal if it comes at the right price.

In its first earnings release since receiving a takeover offer from rival fintech **Stripe** and buyout firm **Advent International**, the company said it now expects transaction margin dollars to grow this year to around \$15.6 billion, from \$15.5 billion in 2025. PayPal had previously said the metric, a key measure of profitability, would decline slightly in 2026.

Management declined to comment specifically on Stripe's proposal, which values the company at \$53 billion. Chief Executive Enrique



PayPal received a takeover offer from Stripe and Advent.

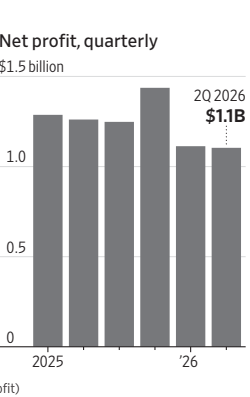
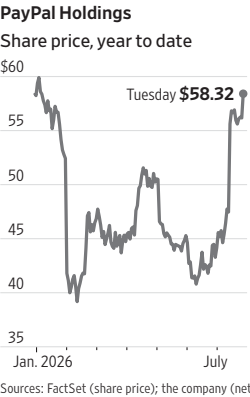
Lores instead said that the company would evaluate all opportunities to maximize shareholder value.

“Our board and management team are open, and have a clear responsibility, to objectively evaluate every opportunity that is presented to us, compare it with our own plan, and choose the option that creates more value,” Lores said.

For now, the company is focused on its turnaround strategy, the CEO said. “We have a very clear view of the value that we can create in the coming years,” he said.

Shares rose 4% to \$58.32 in Tuesday's trading. Stripe and Advent have offered to buy the company at \$60.50 a share.

Lores, the former CEO of HP, assumed PayPal's top job



in March, succeeding former CEO Alex Chriss. He quickly shuffled PayPal's operations into three distinct business lines and said the company will accelerate its adoption of artificial intelligence. PayPal also plans to lay off 20% of staff over the next two to three years in a cost-cutting push, The Wall Street Journal reported in May.

PayPal on Tuesday said

Lores's strategy is beginning to bear fruit. It highlighted growth in Venmo and Braintree, as well as PayPal's debit card and buy now, pay later businesses.

The company said it expects to hit \$400 million in gross run-rate savings this year and is on track to reach Lores's goal of \$1.5 billion in gross run-rate savings over the next two to three years.

The company reported second-quarter profit of \$1.1 billion, or \$1.25 a share, down from \$1.26 billion, or \$1.29 a share, a year earlier.

Stripping out certain one-time items, the company logged adjusted earnings of \$1.38 a share. Analysts surveyed by FactSet were expecting \$1.28 a share.

Revenue rose 5% to \$8.68 billion, beating analyst estimates of \$8.47 billion. Transaction margin dollars grew 1% to \$3.9 billion.

PayPal said it now expects full-year adjusted earnings of \$5.38 a share. It had previously forecast adjusted earnings would fall by low single digits or reflect slightly positive compared with \$5.31 a share a year earlier. Analysts are expecting adjusted earnings to stay flat at \$5.31 a share.

For the current third quarter, the company said it expects a low-single-digit decline in adjusted earnings with slightly positive growth in transaction margin dollars.

Lawsuits Pose Threats To Meta

Continued from page B1

their way through courts for years and overcoming attempts by the companies to have them dismissed.

While the personal-injury lawsuits seek only monetary damages, the state and school district cases go further, asking courts to order Meta to alter some of the features and dynamics that have made its products sticky enough to attract 3.5 billion users. With user growth across its family of apps already slowing to a standstill in the first quarter, adverse changes could be punishing to Meta's core business.

Meta has expressed willingness to work with the states and schools to continue to make its products safe while calling the estimate of more than \$1 trillion in damages absurd.

“A sanction of that size has no analog in the history of consumer protection enforcement,” the company said in a filing.

Even if that number ends up shrinking, the collective financial impact of the cases could be significant. The company warned investors that a loss in the New Mexico case alone could yield \$3.7 billion

in damages once the second phase of the trial has concluded. In a more recent filing, attorneys for the state of New Mexico lowered the damages sought to \$953 million.

The timing is far from ideal for Meta, which, after long dominating the market for social-networking services, is racing to retrofit its business to a world in which AI is rapidly becoming the focus of competition. Meta Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has said success in this new age is “not a given.”

Meta is planning up to \$145 billion in capital spending this year, largely to buy chips and build out its data centers, and earlier this year it laid off 8,000 employees, in part to fund its AI plans.

Analysts are expecting the company to report its first quarter of negative free cash flow when it announces its second-quarter earnings Wednesday.

“It comes down to, How can they handle this? How are they prepared to handle this?” said Brian Mulberry, who manages a portfolio at Zacks Investment Management that includes Meta stock. “I do think it's a real risk for sure.”

Tech analyst Josh Beck, of Raymond James, is taking a wait-and-see approach before deciding what to make of the trials.

“I think it's something that's out there. It's coming up a little bit more,” he said. “But we need to see a little more direction before people



Families of suicide victims after a jury found Meta and YouTube liable this year.

become concerned.”

A Meta spokeswoman said the company would continue to defend itself vigorously while focusing on providing “safe, age-appropriate experiences parents tell us they want for their teens.”

“Every case is different, and the outcome of one doesn't dictate the outcome of another,” the spokeswoman said.

Social-media companies have long been insulated from many legal threats because a federal law, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, shields them from liability for others' content on their platforms.

Judges around the country, however, are letting many cases go to trial on a theory that says their products are designed intentionally to addict people, sidestepping arguments that rely on claims of harmful content.

Meta has denied wrongdoing in response to lawsuits alleging user harm and in court has pointed to new safety features for teenagers' accounts and other product changes it has already made as evidence that it is giving priority to safety over growth. It is heavily promoting teen accounts, building stricter supervision controls, putting limits on late-night notifications and in-

stalling compulsory break reminders.

Meta has said the litigation is trying to fix a sprawling societal issue with a patchwork of court rulings that, if successful, wouldn't stop young people from using other types of social media. It has said it would rather address social-media content and design-related issues with federal legislation that applies to the whole industry versus hashing these cases out one-by-one in court. The company plans to appeal the verdicts in Los Angeles and New Mexico.

But the tech giant has shown signs of willingness to compromise. In June, it set-

tled one of the cases slated for trial in federal court, and it raised the prospect of altering some of its platform features as part of the second phase of the trial in New Mexico, where a judge is weighing further damages requested by the state.

Meta's chief privacy and compliance officer, Michel Protti, testified that the company would be willing to consider changes requested by the state, including making all users under 18 private by default and requiring parent consent to be public and to block notifications during school hours by default, with some exceptions. Meta called many of the requests technically unfeasible, and Protti testified that some had “high potential to grind all our global product development to a halt.”

For Meta, the damages awarded to plaintiffs to date—\$6 million to the 20-year-old woman in Los Angeles (split between Meta and YouTube) and \$375 million to the state of New Mexico—are a small drop in the bucket for a company that brings in more than \$200 billion a year. But it is the precedent the verdicts set that might become an issue.

“You wouldn't want to keep losing these cases in a row. They make a ton of money, but they could be looking at billions in liability,” said data-privacy lawyer Phil Yannella, who isn't involved in the lawsuits. “No company is going to ignore that.”

GSK Plans Push to Cut Costs, Accelerate Its Drug Pipeline

By ADRIÀ CALATAYUD

GSK said it is launching a three-year program to cut costs and reinvest in its drug pipeline, seeking to protect profitability from the patent expiration of a key HIV drug later this decade.

The U.K. drugmaker on Tuesday outlined plans to build a new research-and-development center in Cambridge, England, moving into the biomedical campus of the university town where rival **AstraZeneca** has its headquarters. GSK also said it would conduct more clinical trials for the most promising medicines in its pipeline, hoping to find new growth drivers.

To fund its plans, the company said it is targeting annual savings of £1.9 billion, or \$2.52 billion, by 2029. The program will come at a cost of £2.4 billion, the company added.

The moves are part of GSK Chief Executive Luke Miels's strategy to steer the company toward its target of generating more than £40 billion in sales by 2031 and accelerating growth from then onward.

Since Miels took the helm in January, the company has stepped up dealmaking and made its biggest acquisition in years, the \$10.6 billion purchase of cancer-drug developer Nuvalent. But some investors and analysts still have doubts about whether GSK



GSK plans to close its R&D site in Stevenage, England.

can hit its 2031 target considering that one of its top-selling products, HIV drug dolutegravir, is due to go off patent between 2028 and 2030.

Miels said on a call with reporters that a review of GSK's portfolio identified seven late-stage drugs, spanning 18 indications, for which the company wants to speed development because of their potential. GSK now expects more than 20 late-stage clinical trials to start this year, up from 10 previously.

A small amount of the funds freed by the savings plan is expected to support the company's operating margin during the dolutegravir patent-expiry period, but the bulk will be reinvested in R&D, the company said.

As part of the move to Cambridge, GSK said it would close its research-and-development site at Stevenage,

England, and upgrade its existing labs in Ware, England. The company said it plans to spend £400 million over three years on the changes.

For the second quarter, GSK reported turnover of £8.41 billion, up 5% at constant currency. Analysts had forecast turnover at £8.24 billion, according to consensus estimates provided by the company. Core operating profit came to £2.8 billion, up 7% excluding currency movements, against consensus expectations of £2.675 billion.

Net profit plunged to £435 million from £1.44 billion a year before on higher R&D expenses.

GSK reiterated its full-year outlook, but said it now expects turnover and core operating growth at the upper half of its prior guidance ranges with core EPS at the lower half.

CBS News Fills ‘60 Minutes’ Roles

By JOE FLINT

CBS News is adding several high-profile journalists to “60 Minutes” as new executive producer Nick Bilton begins reshaping the iconic news-magazine following months of upheaval.

New York Times columnist Ross Douthat will join the program's 59th season as a correspondent and author and documentarian Sebastian Junger as a contributor, Bilton said in a memo to staff Tuesday.

Former “CBS Evening News” and morning show anchor Norah O'Donnell will also join “60 Minutes” full-time as a correspondent, expanding her role with the show. Gianna Toboni, a documentary filmmaker and veteran of Vice News, and Trevor Phillips, whom CBS News previously named its senior global affairs correspondent, will join the program as contributors.

Bilton said the correspon-



From left, Ross Douthat, Sebastian Junger and Norah O'Donnell

dents and contributors will carry on the program's “tradition of fearless, independent and impartial reporting” and said the new hires are “entrepreneurial journalists who understand how to reach modern audiences.”

The show has had a tumultuous stretch since Bari Weiss took over as editor in chief of **Paramount's** CBS News last fall, and Bilton has been tasked with rebuilding the storied program.

Last winter, correspondent Sharyn Alfonsi clashed with Weiss over the editor's decision to hold a story about an El Salvador maximum-security prison. Alfonsi's contract wasn't renewed at the end of last season.

Correspondent Cecilia Vega was let go in May, when Bilton was brought in to run the program. Scott Pelley, one of the show's longest-serving correspondents, departed after pushing back against the firings.

Wasserman's Talent Agency to Buy Him Out

By ELIAS SCHISGALL

Casey Wasserman's talent and marketing agency will buy his remaining stake using a new investment from **Providence Equity Partners**, putting an end to months of uncertainty about the company's future.

Providence, a private-equity firm which owned a roughly 60% stake in the company as of April, said it would make an additional invest-

ment to help the agency buy Wasserman's stake. Providence would remain the majority shareholder in the agency, which Wasserman renamed as the Team in March.

Financial terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

Michael Watts, the agency's president since 2014, will be promoted to chief executive officer, Providence said.

Wasserman put the agency up for sale in February, fol-

lowing the Justice Department's release of documents showing flirtatious emails between him and Jeffrey Epstein associate Ghislaine Maxwell in 2003. Wasserman issued an apology after the release.

Wasserman said Tuesday that he leaves the company “with pride in what we created together, gratitude for those who made it possible, and confidence in what comes next.”

BRIAN CHAN/ZUMA WIRE, JAMIE MCCARTHY/GETTY IMAGES, JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

BUSINESS & FINANCE

FAA Warns on Some Boeing MAX Seats

Airlines are asked to inspect 453 jets over safety concerns tied to installations

By JOSHUA KIRBY
AND BENJAMIN KATZ

The Federal Aviation Administration is asking airlines to inspect hundreds of Boeing 737 MAX passenger jets for improperly installed cabin seats that could prove dangerous in the case of an emergency landing or severe turbulence.

In a proposed airworthiness directive published late Monday, the U.S. regulator said it had received a report that seats on some MAX jets were incorrectly installed in their tracks.

The directive requires a “detailed inspection” of the

seat installations across 453 Boeing 737-8 and 737-9 aircraft, the FAA said.

“A track-mounted passenger seat assembly that is installed incorrectly can disengage from the seat tracks if there is an increased load, turbulence, or emergency landing,” the FAA said. “This condition, if not addressed, could result in injury to passengers and crew during an emergency landing or could block the aisle, which could slow evacuation.”

Boeing said it welcomed the FAA making its guidance to operators on the inspections mandatory. The directive affects around a fifth of the more than 2,300 MAX jets in operation.

The company reported financial results for the second quarter Tuesday.

The new quality issue

comes less than two weeks after the FAA handed back authority to Boeing to perform final safety signoffs of its newly produced 737s. The FAA had revoked the privilege in 2019 after two fatal MAX crashes, and had last year started allowing Boeing to resume issuing some of the so-called airworthiness certificates for its jets.

The U.S. company has also been on the cusp of getting final FAA signoff for two long-delayed versions of the 737 MAX—the smaller MAX 7 and the bigger MAX 10. The certification of those aircraft has been caught up in the plane-maker’s back-to-back crises, including a 2024 incident in which an incorrectly installed door plug blew off the side of an Alaska Airlines jet.

The Alaska incident led to dozens of 737s being tempo-



The proposed seat inspections are estimated to cost operators about \$2.7 million in total.

rarily grounded and a proposed fine from the FAA of more than \$3 million, the maximum allowed civil penalty, for what the regulator described as “safety violations.”

The FAA’s latest call for quality inspections affects the three MAX models in operation across major U.S. and international carriers.

In the U.S., the proposed in-

spections are estimated to cost operators about \$2.7 million in total before any re-installation costs, the FAA said.

Boeing aircraft have been involved in high-profile safety issues of late, including an accident earlier this month when a window dislodged from the side of an older variant of the 737 in Greece led to a passenger being partially sucked out the side of the air-

craft.

The 61-year-old passenger survived the ordeal, and pilots were able to safely divert the plane.

The incident, onboard a Ryanair flight, mirrored a similar incident onboard a Southwest jet in 2018.

The National Transportation Safety Board is assisting with the investigation into the cause.

Boeing’s Revenue Increases

Continued from page B1
\$24.56 billion, driven by stronger commercial plane deliveries.

Showing progress in delay-plagued programs is critical for Boeing’s standing with the Trump administration as well as customers. A series of safety and quality lapses prompted the Federal Aviation Administration in 2024 to limit the company’s output and slow the certification of new aircraft models. Securing regulators’ approval is a critical step before commercial jets can be delivered to airlines.

In a directive Monday, the



The second 737 MAX 10 to be manufactured on the new North Line is towed into the Everett Factory in Washington.

FAA proposed inspections of hundreds of Boeing 737 MAX jets over concerns that passenger seats were improperly installed.

“We have some important go-dos as we continue to stabilize across our entire production system and complete the certification work” for the

company’s 737 and 777 programs, Chief Executive Kelly Ortberg said in a Tuesday message to employees. He said the company is “also adding

significant resources” to help the Air Force One program stay on schedule.

President Trump almost canceled Air Force plans to

have Boeing build two new jets to replace the models that have been flying since the George H.W. Bush administration.

The manufacturer originally said it wouldn’t be able to finish overhauling the souped-up aircraft, known as the VC-25B, until after Trump left office.

The company later moved the delivery of the first jet to 2028, a shift that required it to bring on more mechanics and engineers qualified to work under the strict classification rules required for the program.

Trump this year flew a modified commercial airplane provided by the Qatari government on some trips, though security concerns forced him to fly home on an older Air Force One jet from a recent visit to Turkey. The White House said the Qatari jet, known as the VC-25B Bridge, will receive additional upgrades this fall.

Arnault Shifts Own Strategy

Continued from page B1
garded as deeply unfair, the people added, and a steady stream of articles in other French publications about tensions within his family and jockeying among his five children.

Arnault has traditionally shrugged off bad press. When his children complain about a newspaper article, he reminds them that he endured worse at their age, when he was fighting bruising corporate battles. “You need a thick skin,” he told one of them earlier this year after they complained about what they perceived as an unfair story.

His response this week reflects a broader shift among business leaders and other powerful figures, who are increasingly using podcasts and social media to bypass traditional news outlets and speak directly to the public. Nvidia chief Jensen Huang joined X

last week, debuting on the platform with a letter defending open AI models.

In his first post on X, Arnault reposted his open letter to Le Monde—issued Sunday via LVMH’s press account—and said he was “deeply touched by the many messages” he had received following its publication.

Arnault’s arrival on X was amplified by Elon Musk, who reposted the luxury tycoon’s inaugural post and endorsed the idea of communicating directly with the public rather than via the media.

In the three-page letter published Sunday evening, Arnault responded to a series of points raised in Le Monde’s articles with a mix of sarcasm, self-defense and score-setting.

Arnault appeared particularly exercised by suggestions of a “Succession”-style struggle among his children—Delphine, Antoine, Alexandre, Frédéric and Jean—to take over. They all have roles at LVMH.

“Among the Arnaults, apparently, we don’t discuss, we plot; we don’t deliberate, we compete,” he wrote. In reality, he said, his children run businesses, manage teams, make



Bernard Arnault has traditionally shrugged off bad press.

decisions and call one another on Sundays.

“What, in an ordinary family, is called a Sunday is called an intrigue in ours,” Arnault wrote.

The dispute itself has a familial twist. Arnault’s eldest son, Antoine, oversees LVMH’s communications and image, while Xavier Niel, the telecoms billionaire and longtime partner of Arnault’s daughter Delphine, is a shareholder in Le

Monde.

“He doesn’t deny anything. That’s the most important thing for us,” said Raphaëlle Bacqué, one of the Le Monde journalists who wrote the articles.

Bacqué defended Le Monde’s reporting, saying the newspaper’s sources were “as close to the group as you can get.” Arnault’s more humorous response was “cleverly done,” she added.

Arnault’s anger was heightened by the fact that he had spoken with the newspaper for the series, as had his children and several longtime LVMH executives.

“I very clearly suspect you of having punished transparency,” he wrote in the letter, arguing that rivals who had refused to engage with the newspaper had received more favorable treatment.

Arnault has long been a polarizing figure in France. Admirers credit him with turning brands such as Louis Vuitton and Dior into global powerhouses and helping establish France as the dominant force in the luxury industry. To critics, he is a symbol of inequality, his face appearing on placards during protests against President Emmanuel Macron’s pension reforms.

Arnault ended his letter on a more conciliatory note, inviting the Le Monde journalists for an aperitif at the Fondation Louis Vuitton, the brand’s contemporary-art museum in Paris. The wines, he promised, would be French.

He also said he would continue doing the newspaper’s crossword puzzles.

Those, Arnault conceded, “are excellent.”

Barclays Raises Key Targets

By IAN WALKER

Barclays raised targets for two key metrics after a strong second quarter that was boosted by its global markets unit and investment banking fees.

The British bank said Tuesday that pretax profit for the second quarter was £3.25 billion, or \$4.32 billion, compared with £2.48 billion for the comparable period a year earlier, and a company-compiled consensus of £3.12 billion.

Total income was £8.34 billion, compared with £7.19 billion a year earlier and a consensus of £8.12 billion.

Barclays raised its group income target to £31.5 billion from £31 billion and net interest income target, excluding Barclays Investment Bank and Head Office, to more than £13.7 billion, from over £13.5 billion.

Companies Tap Retired Leaders

Continued from page B1
David Deno, served as the CEO of Outback Steakhouse parent Bloomin’ Brands from 2019 to 2024. After he retired from Bloomin’ in 2024, he then served on the boards of Krispy Kreme and Panera Brands.

He steps into Cracker Barrel at an unusual moment. For much of the past year, the company has attempted to move on after efforts to modernize the chain backfired. Cracker Barrel’s exiting CEO, Julie Masino, 55 years old, sought to update the chain’s look and menu to reach a younger audience.

The moves alienated some, including President Trump, with many arguing that the chain was abandoning its country heritage. Cracker Barrel

later reversed the change and, more recently, the company’s stock had been rising.

The decision to recruit a new CEO is meant to reassure investors, management specialists said, though the bench of potential executives who carry both industry experience and trust on Wall Street is small.

“When all of these factors are taken into account, then the age of a candidate becomes kind of secondary because you’re dealing with a limited pool of candidates,” Tonello said.

Cracker Barrel is paying Deno \$465,000 for relocation expenses to Nashville, Tenn., as well as providing a corporate apartment and twice monthly trips back to his home in St. Petersburg, Fla. for up to six months. His annual salary will be \$1 million. Masino stands to collect \$4.6 million in exit payments over two years, filings show.

Some CEOs say it takes some convincing to get them to give up their retirement. Before former PayPal CEO Dan Schul-



Retired PayPal CEO Dan Schulman was hired by Verizon and Cracker Barrel’s new CEO David Deno once led Outback’s parent.

man became the CEO of Verizon last year, he was living on a ranch in Montana. “I was extremely happily retired, I will say. And I felt like I was a role model for retirement,” Schulman, now 68 years old, said at a Wall Street Journal event.

Schulman had been on Verizon’s board for years, and saw the company at an inflection point.



“I also felt that the company had the ability to make that pivot,” he said last year. “If I didn’t feel that, I wouldn’t have taken the job.”

Boeing, meanwhile, extended its mandatory retirement age when it appointed then 64-year-old Kelly Ortberg as CEO in 2024. Ortberg ran one of Boeing’s big suppliers, Rockwell Collins, until 2018,

when it then merged with another aerospace manufacturer and eventually ended up part of RTX. He retired in 2021 but remained on the RTX board.

Jo-Ellen Pozner, an associate professor of management at Santa Clara University, said there tend to be two types of retired CEOs who make a comeback: those who remain active in business—either through board service or advisory roles—and those who simply realize they have little to do now that they are no longer running a company.

“There are some retired top executives who just have nothing else going on,” Pozner said. “They’re bored, and they don’t have anyone telling them how great they are all the time.”

The results of experienced CEOs tend to vary. Research published by Spencer Stuart in 2020 showed that while nearly all of the experienced CEOs outperformed the market in their first role, only about 40% managed to do the same in subsequent positions.

The challenges in transform-

ing Cracker Barrel are also great, restaurant-industry executives and management specialists said.

“I don’t know whether he’s going to find a magic formula because it’s unclear if there is a magic formula,” Pozner said of Deno.

At Bloomin’ Brands, Deno rose to the top job after serving for years as the company’s chief financial officer. He guided the company through the pandemic and made a then-prescient call to not furlough employees during the earliest days of Covid, helping restaurants to recover more quickly. The company’s stock, though, was roughly flat during his tenure.

In an interview at the University of Michigan in 2024, Deno said he saw the job of a CEO as mostly focusing on culture. “This shocks people,” he said. “I probably spend 60% of my time on culture and leadership and people selection.”

He added: “If I don’t have the right people working for me, I’m dead.”

Yr	Lch	Stock	52-Wk %			Stock	Yr	Lch	Stock	52-Wk %			Stock	Yr	Lch	Stock	52-Wk %			Stock	Yr	Lch	Stock	
			Sym	Hi	Lo					Sym	Hi	Lo					Sym	Hi	Lo					
0.17	0.246	E-Power	EPWO	4.45	-0.45	JupiterNeurosci	JUNR	0.40	0.33	ReitarLogtech	RZTR	0.07	-0.16	1.86	2.20	EDBL	2.42	-1.62	Realliance	RETA	1.96	-0.53	1.80	0.70
0.85	0.701	Empower	ELPW	0.17	-0.57	KandallVennet	WMFA	0.22	-0.21	ResearchFrontiers	REFR	0.41	-0.40	1.73	1.48	EMPO	2.86	-0.53	RichTechRobotics	RRT	0.57	-0.54	1.40	0.40
0.72	0.73	LongPower	EMPO	2.86	-0.53	KestrelG6-625-46	HMLC	9.59	-0.39	RichTechRobotics	RRT	0.57	-0.54	1.40	1.48	EMPO	2.86	-0.53	RichTechRobotics	RRT	0.57	-0.54	1.40	0.40
0.89	0.112	Enovix	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	Kowal	KOW	0.20	-0.19	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20
0.89	0.112	Enigmatig	EGG	2.04	-0.59	Philips	PHG	23.85	-0.21	RiverNorthPdrA	RNA	15.92	0.04	0.89	0.112	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20
0.103	0.17	Enliven	ENLV	2.08	-0.47	LG Display	LPD	2.85	-0.67	RobiEnergy	ROBE	2.56	-2.48	0.89	0.112	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20
0.103	0.17	Enovix	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	LG Display	LPD	2.85	-0.67	RobiEnergy	ROBE	2.56	-2.48	0.89	0.112	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20
0.327	0.244	Enovix Medical	ENMX	0.33	-0.42	Lexiplex	LXP	0.20	-0.19	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20
0.504	0.72	EnergyPower	ESPA	0.69	-0.34	Libang	LIBG	0.03	0.83	SiK Hyink	SHYK	128.29	-0.90	0.89	0.112	ENOV	1.12	-0.72	SiCA Tech	SCAT	0.26	-0.26	1.86	2.20
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Futures Contracts

Metal & Petroleum Futures						
	Contract					Open interest
	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	
Copper-High (CMX) —25,000 lbs.; \$ per lb.						
July	6.2830	6.2835		6.2660	6.3220	-0.0170 2,151
Sept	6.3950	6.3955		6.2940	6.3590	-0.0195 138,389
Gold (CMX) —100 Troy oz.; \$ per Troy oz.						
July	4025.70	4025.70	4025.70			
Aug	4083.00	4085.70	4011.10	4038.70	-38.20	109,686
Sept	4089.90	4089.90	4025.00	4052.70	-38.20	3,275
Oct	4107.80	4110.60	4040.00	4067.40	-37.90	36,280
Nov	4092.70	4094.30	4067.60	4083.60	-37.80	280
Dec	4142.00	4145.00	4071.00	4098.60	-37.80	203,066
Palladium (NYM) —50 Troy oz.; \$ per Troy oz.						
July	1202.00	1202.50	1200.00	1266.50	-23.10	
Sept	1288.00	1292.50	1249.50	1273.20	-23.60	17,162
Platinum (NYM) —50 Troy oz.; \$ per Troy oz.						
July	1630.00	1630.00	1630.00	1612.20	-8.40	1
Oct	1625.00	1631.50	1589.10	1623.30	-8.90	44,772
Silver (CMX) —5,000 Troy oz.; \$ per Troy oz.						
July	58.660	58.660	58.660	57.296	-1.176	9
Sept	58.745	58.825	58.565	57.529	-1.183	81,224
Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM) —100,000 bbls.; \$ per bbl.						
Sept	82.00	82.43	77.78	79.26	-3.35	280,817
Oct	79.66	80.08	76.05	77.17	-3.08	150,445
Nov	77.59	78.00	74.52	75.33	-2.84	102,881
Dec	75.90	76.37	73.22	73.85	-2.68	213,183
June 27	71.46	71.71	69.37	69.66	-2.20	135,675
Dec	69.54	69.71	67.70	67.98	-1.93	149,943
NY Harbor ULSD (NYM) —42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.						
Aug	4.1233	4.1734	4.0580	4.1509	0.0393	14,969
Sept	3.9750	4.0613	3.9392	4.0130	0.0070	76,236
Gasoline-NY RBOB (NYM) —42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.						
Aug	3.3075	3.3577	3.2939	3.3345	0.0072	19,219
Sept	3.1523	3.1850	3.1191	3.1443	-0.0253	101,690
Natural Gas (NYM) —10,000 MMBtu; \$ per MMBtu.						
Aug	2.741	2.761	2.635	2.662	-1.05	19,316
Sept	2.774	2.775	2.675	2.701	-0.087	364,655
Oct	2.804	2.809	2.718	2.744	-0.079	151,093
Dec	3.732	3.739	3.662	3.679	-0.073	126,208
Jan 27	4.189	4.195	4.121	4.136	-0.072	149,673
March	2.996	3.003	2.959	2.976	-0.027	139,088
Agriculture Futures						
Corn (CBT) —5,000 bu.; cents per bu.						
Sept	452.00	462.25	451.50	458.50	6.75	536,115
Dec	474.75	484.25	473.50	480.50	6.50	778,287
Oats (CBT) —5,000 bu.; cents per bu.						
Sept	314.75	317.75	310.75	313.75	-1.00	825

	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Dec	329.00	332.75	326.25	329.25	.50	1,790
Soybeans (CBT) —5,000 bu.; cents per bu.						
Aug	1210.25	1217.00	1202.25	1212.00	3.50	37,913
Nov	1215.50	1225.00	1206.25	1220.00	6.25	504,120
Soybean Meal (CBT) —100 tons; \$ per ton.						
Aug	321.00	323.50	319.00	320.30	-.50	30,181
Dec	324.60	328.10	322.40	327.80	3.70	283,124
Soybean Oil (CBT) —60,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Aug	71.51	71.71	70.10	70.76	-.70	34,442
Dec	69.64	69.88	68.42	68.93	-.65	265,663
Rough Rice (CBT) —2,000 cwt.; \$ per cwt.						
Sept	13.59	13.75	13.53	13.66	.02	11,669
Nov	14.01	14.09	13.94	14.07	.03	1,006
Wheat (CBT) —5,000 bu.; cents per bu.						
Sept	661.50	665.75	650.50	662.50	2.50	208,253
Dec	679.75	682.50	668.50	679.75	2.25	155,686
Wheat (KC) —5,000 bu.; cents per bu.						
Sept	729.00	735.25	722.50	726.25	-2.75	128,589
Dec	745.50	751.50	739.25	742.50	-3.50	108,081
Cattle-Feeder (CME) —50,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Aug	339.750	346.000	338.750	343.075	4.825	14,174
Sept	333.300	341.000	332.600	337.225	5.300	19,559
Cattle-Live (CME) —40,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Aug	225.500	228.375	225.500	227.475	2.250	42,003
Oct	219.075	221.975	218.500	222.175	3.400	121,247
Hogs-Lean (CME) —40,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Aug	102.675	103.350	102.500	103.100	.125	31,684
Oct	87.625	88.725	87.250	88.275	.475	121,541
Lumber (CME) —27,500 bd. ft. \$ per 1,000 bd. ft.						
Sept	646.50	651.00	637.50	638.00	-9.50	7,030
Nov	639.00	639.50	637.00	637.50	-4.50	1,012
Milk (CME) —200,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
July	15.78	15.79	15.76	15.77	.01	5,441
Aug	16.75	16.82	16.49	16.62	-.18	6,024
Cocoa (ICE-US) —10 metric tons; \$ per ton.						
Sept	5,150	5,233	4,992	5,201	101	64,894
Dec	5,298	5,370	5,131	5,332	89	53,138
Coffee (ICE-US) —37,500 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Sept	328.00	346.65	328.00	339.40	14.85	59,949
Dec	308.10	323.75	308.10	317.30	11.40	58,173
Sugar-World (ICE-US) —112,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Oct	14.58	14.70	14.50	14.55	-.03	498,152
March 27	15.50	15.58	15.38	15.41	-.06	300,906
Sugar-Domestic (ICE-US) —112,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Sept	36.00	36.00	36.00	36.00	-.25	190
Cotton (ICE-US) —50,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Oct	79.95	79.47	79.65	79.21	-1.33	137
Dec	80.70	81.30	79.71	80.53	-.35	197,509
Orange Juice (ICE-US) —15,000 lbs.; cents per lb.						
Sept	141.30	142.60	134.55	136.85	-4.60	7,945
Nov	144.40	145.80	138.55	140.65	-4.65	1,156

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COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

UCC PUBLIC SALE NOTICE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT NYC SFR Portfolio LLC, successor-in-interest to Axos Bank ("Secured Party") will offer for sale at public auction (the "Sale") (i) 100% of the limited liability membership interests (the "Membership Interests") in 12 E 72nd LLC, a New York limited liability company ("Pledged Entity"), held by Edward L. Croman, Steven Croman, Harriet Croman, and 12 East 72nd Manager LLC (each a "Grantor," and collectively, "Grantors") as set forth in that certain Pledge and Security Agreement dated August 25, 2023 (the "Pledge Agreement"), together with (2) all cash payments in kind, principal, interest, fees, commissions, reimbursements, and other payments of any kind and all conversions, substitutions, exchanges, and replacements made pursuant to the Articles of Organization and Limited Liability Company Agreement of Pledged Entity, in each case relating to the Membership Interests in Pledged Entity (the "Collateral Proceeds," together with the Membership Interests, the "Collateral").

The Sale will take place on October 8, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time in compliance with Uniform Commercial Code Section 9-610 both (i) at Moritt Hack & Hamoff LLP, 1407 Broadway, 39th Floor, New York, NY 10018 and (ii) virtually via online video conference. The URL address and password for the online video conference will be provided to all registered participants.

The Sale is being made in connection with the foreclosure on a pledge of the Collateral to the Secured Party by Grantors under the Pledge Agreement, pursuant to which Grantors have granted to Secured Party a first priority lien on the Collateral as security for a loan in the original principal amount of \$31,000,000.00 (the "Loan") from Axos Bank (predecessor-in-interest to Secured Party) to Pledged Entity and Steven Croman (together, "Borrowers"). The Loan was made pursuant to that certain Note dated August 25, 2023, entered into between Axos Bank and Borrowers (the "Note") and pursuant to that certain Loan Agreement dated August 25, 2023, entered into between Axos Bank and Borrowers (the "Loan Agreement"). It is the understanding of Secured Party (but without representation or warranty of any kind by Secured Party as to the accuracy of the following) that the Loan is in default.

Based upon information provided by Borrowers, it is the understanding of Secured Party (but without representation or warranty of any kind by Secured Party as to the accuracy of the following) that (i) Grantors own the Membership Interests, (ii) Pledged Entity is the owner of certain real property located at 12-14 East 72nd Street, New York, New York (the "Property"), (iii) Pledged Entity's principal assets are the Property and certain related rights, and (iv) the Property is encumbered by a mortgage lien granted by Pledged Entity as security for the Loan made pursuant to that certain Consolidated, Amended and Restated Mortgage, Assignment of Leases and Rents, Security Agreement and Fixture Filing dated August 25, 2023 (the "Mortgage").

An online datasite for the Sale (the "Datasite") is available at the following link: <http://www.12East72ndNYCSale.com>. The Datasite will include certain relevant information that Secured Party possesses concerning Pledged Entity, Borrowers, the Loan, and the Mortgage (collectively, the "Disclosed Materials") as well as the Terms of Sale for Public Auction relating to the Sale of the Collateral ("Terms of Sale"). Access to such information will be conditioned upon execution of a confidentiality agreement which can be found on the Datasite. To participate in the auction, prospective bidders must confirm their ability to satisfy the Requirements in the manner described in the Terms of Sale, and following such confirmation, such qualified participants will be provided a URL and password enabling access to the video conference for the Sale.

THE MARKETPLACE

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

In re: [Finch Therapeutics Group, Inc., et al.](#), Debtors.

Chapter 11, Case No. 26-10409 (LSS) (Jointly Administered)

NOTICE OF (I) ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLICITATION AND VOTING PROCEDURES AND (II) FINAL HEARING ON APPROVAL AND CONFIRMATION OF COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT on July 24, 2026, the debtors in possession in the above-captioned chapter 11 cases (the "Debtors") filed the First Amended Combined Disclosure Statement and Joint Chapter 11 Plan of Finch Therapeutics Group, Inc. and its Debtors Affiliates (the "Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan"). Pursuant to an Order dated July 24, 2026 (the "Conditional Approval and Procedures Order"), the Bankruptcy Court conditionally approved the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan for solicitation purposes only. A combined hearing to consider the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan (the "Combined Hearing") will be held before the Honorable Laurie Seiber Silverstein, in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, 824 North Market Street, 6th Floor, Courtroom 2, Wilmington, Delaware 19801, on **September 1, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. (prevailing Eastern Time)**. Objections to confirmation of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, including any objection to the adequacy of the disclosures if any, must: (a) be in writing; (b) state the name and address of the objecting party and the nature of the objection; and (c) be filed with the Court and served as to be actually received by the following parties by **4:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time) on August 25, 2026**: (i) co-counsel to the Debtors, [Ropes & Gray LLP](#), 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036 (Attn: Cristine Piro Schwarzman and Cameron J. Cavalieri; email: cristine.schwarzman@ropegray.com and cameron.cavalieri@ropegray.com) and [Chipman Brown Cironi & Cole LLP](#), 1313 N. Market Street, Suite 5400, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Robert A. Weber; email: [weber@chipmanbrown.com](#)) and [Chipman Brown Cironi & Cole LLP](#), 420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 442, New York, NY 10170 (Attn: Daniel C. Egan; email: [egan@chipmanbrown.com](#)); and (ii) the Office of the United States Trustee for the District of Delaware, 844 King Street, Suite 2207, Lock Box 35, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Joseph McMahon; email: [joseph.mcmahon@usdoj.gov](#)).

Pursuant to the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order, the Bankruptcy Court approved the use of the Combined Disclosure Statement to accept or reject the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan and procedures to tabulate votes on the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan. If you are a holder of an interest against the Debtors as of July 15, 2026 (the "Voting Record Date") and entitled to vote, you have received a ballot form (a "Ballot") and instructions for completing the Ballot. Ballots must be completed and returned in accordance with the instructions by **4:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time) on August 24, 2026 (the "Voting Deadline")**. Failure to follow the instructions may disqualify such Ballot and vote. The following are important dates to note.

Important Dates

DESCRIPTION	DEADLINE
Voting Record Date	July 15, 2026
Solicitation Commencement Date	July 29, 2026 (within three (3) business days from entry of the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter)
Deadline to File Plan Supplement	August 17, 2026
Voting Deadline for the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan	August 24, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan Object Deadline	August 25, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Deadline to File Confirmation Brief and Other Evidence Supporting the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan	August 28, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Deadline for Reply to Objections to Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan	August 28, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Deadline to File Voting Report	August 28, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Combined Hearing	September 1, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. (ET)

Copies of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan and the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order are available for review without charge at the website maintained by the Claims and Bonding Agent, <https://omniaggregationsolutions.com/FinchTherapeutics-Ballots> or by calling (888) 804-0751 (US & Canada toll free) and (787) 286-6369 (International), or by email at [finchtherapeuticsinquiries@omniagent.com](#).

The Debtors in these chapter 11 cases, along with the last four digits of each Debtor's federal tax identification number are: Finch Therapeutics Group, Inc. (3558); Finch Therapeutics, Inc. (3711); Finch Therapeutics Holdings LLC (0727); and Finch Research and Development LLC (9205). The Debtors' service address is 75 State Street, Suite 100, Boston, MA 02109.

BANKRUPTCIES

IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF DELAWARE

In re: [Finch Therapeutics Group, Inc., et al.](#), Debtors.

Chapter 11, Case No. 26-10409 (LSS) (Jointly Administered)

NOTICE OF (I) ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLICITATION AND VOTING PROCEDURES AND (II) FINAL HEARING ON APPROVAL AND CONFIRMATION OF COMBINED DISCLOSURE STATEMENT AND PLAN

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE THAT on July 24, 2026, the debtors in possession in the above-captioned chapter 11 cases (the "Debtors") filed the First Amended Combined Disclosure Statement and Joint Chapter 11 Plan of Finch Therapeutics Group, Inc. and its Debtors Affiliates (the "Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan"). Pursuant to an Order dated July 24, 2026 (the "Conditional Approval and Procedures Order"), the Bankruptcy Court conditionally approved the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan for solicitation purposes only. A combined hearing to consider the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan (the "Combined Hearing") will be held before the Honorable Laurie Seiber Silverstein, in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, 824 North Market Street, 6th Floor, Courtroom 2, Wilmington, Delaware 19801, on **September 1, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. (prevailing Eastern Time)**. Objections to confirmation of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan, including any objection to the adequacy of the disclosures if any, must: (a) be in writing; (b) state the name and address of the objecting party and the nature of the objection; and (c) be filed with the Court and served as to be actually received by the following parties by **4:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time) on August 25, 2026**: (i) co-counsel to the Debtors, [Ropes & Gray LLP](#), 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036 (Attn: Cristine Piro Schwarzman and Cameron J. Cavalieri; email: cristine.schwarzman@ropegray.com and cameron.cavalieri@ropegray.com) and [Chipman Brown Cironi & Cole LLP](#), 1313 N. Market Street, Suite 5400, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Robert A. Weber; email: [weber@chipmanbrown.com](#)) and [Chipman Brown Cironi & Cole LLP](#), 420 Lexington Avenue, Suite 442, New York, NY 10170 (Attn: Daniel C. Egan; email: [egan@chipmanbrown.com](#)); and (ii) the Office of the United States Trustee for the District of Delaware, 844 King Street, Suite 2207, Lock Box 35, Wilmington, DE 19801 (Attn: Joseph McMahon; email: [joseph.mcmahon@usdoj.gov](#)).

Pursuant to the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order, the Bankruptcy Court approved the use of the Combined Disclosure Statement to accept or reject the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan and procedures to tabulate votes on the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan. If you are a holder of an interest against the Debtors as of July 15, 2026 (the "Voting Record Date") and entitled to vote, you have received a ballot form (a "Ballot") and instructions for completing the Ballot. Ballots must be completed and returned in accordance with the instructions by **4:00 p.m. (prevailing Eastern Time) on August 24, 2026 (the "Voting Deadline")**. Failure to follow the instructions may disqualify such Ballot and vote. The following are important dates to note.

Important Dates

DESCRIPTION	DEADLINE
Voting Record Date	July 15, 2026
Solicitation Commencement Date	July 29, 2026 (within three (3) business days from entry of the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter)
Deadline to File Plan Supplement	August 17, 2026
Voting Deadline for the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan	August 24, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan Object Deadline	August 25, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Deadline to File Confirmation Brief and Other Evidence Supporting the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan	August 28, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Deadline for Reply to Objections to Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan	August 28, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Deadline to File Voting Report	August 28, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. (ET)
Combined Hearing	September 1, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. (ET)

Copies of the Combined Disclosure Statement and Plan and the Conditional Approval and Procedures Order are available for review without charge at the website maintained by the Claims and Bonding Agent, <https://omniaggregationsolutions.com/FinchTherapeutics-Ballots> or by calling (888) 804-0751 (US & Canada toll free) and (787) 286-6369 (International), or by email at [finchtherapeuticsinquiries@omniagent.com](#).

The Debtors in these chapter 11 cases, along with the last four digits of each Debtor's federal tax identification number are: Finch Therapeutics Group, Inc. (3558); Finch Therapeutics, Inc. (3711);

MARKETS DIGEST

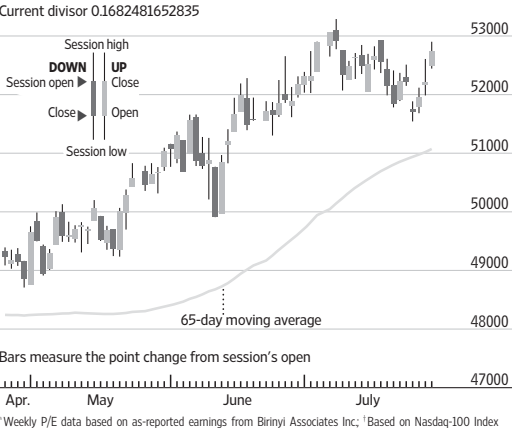
EQUITIES

Dow Jones Industrial Average

52747.32▲537.24, or 1.03%

High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio22.3824.91
P/E estimate *20.2321.34
Dividend yield1.481.63
All-time high53055.91, 07/06/26



Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg YTD	% chg 3-yr. ann.
Dow Jones									
Industrial Average	52901.87	52443.52	52747.32	537.24	1.03	53055.91	43588.58	18.2	14.2
Transportation Avg	22050.99	21796.66	21889.07	-177.24	-0.80	23933.14	15067.87	36.8	9.4
Utility Average	1177.27	1155.25	1155.58	-1.57	-0.14	1190.23	1048.33	6.4	7.4
Total Stock Market	73838.21	73152.90	73626.35	136.80	0.19	75286.10	61627.03	16.9	17.1
Barron's 400	1623.83	1609.18	1622.89	10.10	0.63	1635.15	1316.75	20.3	16.3

Nasdaq Stock Market									
Nasdaq Composite	24984.50	24581.01	24876.91	-55.17	-0.22	27093.90	20650.13	17.9	20.2
Nasdaq-100	27926.53	27452.95	27763.13	-276.08	-0.98	30660.60	22763.31	19.1	20.8

S&P									
500 Index	7452.09	7382.95	7428.78	15.60	0.21	7609.78	6238.01	16.6	8.5
MidCap 400	3802.71	3775.50	3798.37	2.59	0.07	3852.54	3104.60	18.5	14.9
SmallCap 600	1780.91	1765.78	1779.60	10.43	0.59	1804.34	1323.05	29.9	21.2

Other Indexes									
Russell 2000	2955.39	2923.27	2953.80	5.77	0.20	3024.37	2166.78	31.7	19.0
NYSE Composite	24258.93	24098.82	24229.67	130.85	0.54	24229.67	20267.69	16.7	10.1
Value Line	686.24	679.54	685.30	5.76	0.85	685.30	590.50	11.0	9.1
NYSE Arca Biotech	8759.83	8591.27	8743.17	151.90	1.77	8917.63	5640.67	51.7	22.2
NYSE Arca Pharma	1288.86	1251.88	1273.25	21.37	1.71	1273.25	881.47	38.1	13.1
KBW Bank	189.10	186.74	188.97	0.75	0.40	191.84	139.52	30.0	15.1
PHLX [®] Gold/Silver	310.94	303.71	307.65	-6.84	-2.18	470.37	204.07	45.7	-10.1
PHLX [®] Oil Service	94.31	91.23	91.44	-2.99	-3.17	109.24	58.66	44.1	24.7
PHLX [®] Semiconductor	11187.44	10799.84	11035.68	-519.20	-4.49	14634.72	5527.61	92.3	55.8
Choe Volatility	19.52	17.88	18.21	-0.46	-2.46	31.05	13.47	14.0	21.8

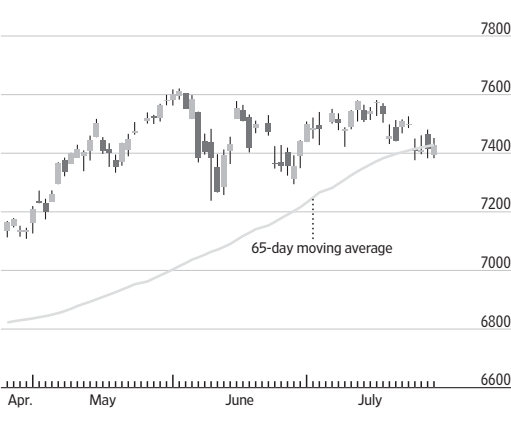
§Nasdaq PHLX

S&P 500 Index

7428.78▲15.60, or 0.21%

High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio *25.1724.85
P/E estimate *21.1024.03
Dividend yield *1.111.20
All-time high7609.78, 06/02/26

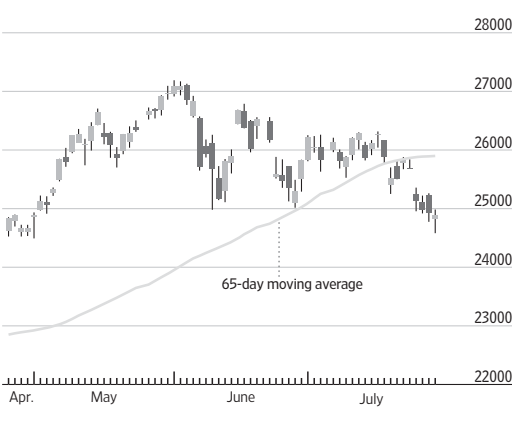


Nasdaq Composite Index

24876.91▼55.17, or 0.22%

High, low, open and close for each trading day of the past three months.

Trailing P/E ratio **33.0532.72
P/E estimate **25.1230.01
Dividend yield **0.580.67
All-time high: 27093.90, 06/02/26



Late Trading

Most-active and biggest movers among NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE Amer. and Nasdaq issues from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. ET as reported by electronic trading services, securities dealers and regional exchanges. Minimum share price of \$2 and minimum after-hours volume of 50,000 shares.

Most-active issues in late trading

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	Last	Net chg	After Hours % chg	High	Low
Grab Holdings	GRAB	25,582.4	3.44	-0.01	-0.29	3.45	3.41
Fidelity MSCI North Amer	FINA	13,718.0	24.84	...	unch.	24.84	24.84
Invc MSCI North AmClimt	KLMN	11,210.0	30.47	...	unch.	30.47	30.47
NVIDIA	NVDA	8,421.0	197.06	0.05	0.03	201.38	183.66
Intel	INTC	8,216.1	86.69	0.39	0.45	87.17	85.64
Applied Digital	APLD	7,710.7	26.68	0.06	0.23	26.98	26.45
Amazon.com	AMZN	6,717.8	231.20	0.34	0.15	237.66	216.21
Ford Motor	F	6,548.3	15.77	0.81	5.41	16.34	14.74

Percentage gainers...

Leverage 2x Lg BE Dly	BEG	200.3	26.60	4.59	20.85	28.23	21.70
Enigmatig	EGG	1,252.2	4.38	0.57	14.96	4.86	3.80
LiveWire Group	LVWR	481.3	2.23	0.28	14.44	2.32	1.84
Teradyne	TER	280.8	365.34	44.69	13.94	374.00	311.99
Bloom Energy	BE	4,068.8	185.11	18.27	10.95	191.00	164.35

...And losers

O-I Glass	OI	171.8	7.82	-1.24	-13.69	9.12	7.25
T3 Defense	DFNS	662.6	21.20	-2.80	-11.67	24.30	18.31
Logitech International	LOGI	126.2	98.64	-13.02	-11.66	117.38	91.12
Avis Budget Group	CAR	196.3	148.00	-18.32	-11.01	166.32	138.83
Skyworks Solutions	SWKS	799.2	57.62	-7.06	-10.92	65.10	57.30

Trading Diary

Volume, Advancers, Decliners

	NYSE	NYSE Amer.
Total volume ¹	1,250,866,818	17,445,363
Adv. volume ²	777,050,920	2,779,425
Decl. volume ²	468,432,902	14,581,267
Issues traded	2,846	297
Advances	1,743	105
Declines	1,018	187
Unchanged	85	5
New highs	169	6
New lows	43	18
Closing Arms ¹	1.10	2.44
Block trades ³	4,056	150

	Nasdaq	NYSE Arca
Total volume ¹	8,584,961,237	342,987,430
Adv. volume ²	4,559,427,877	168,444,844
Decl. volume ²	3,957,129,343	173,581,687
Issues traded	5,091	2,646
Advances	2,424	1,610
Declines	2,456	1,007
Unchanged	211	29
New highs	269	251
New lows	289	70
Closing Arms ¹	0.86	1.55
Block trades ³	53,053	1,616

¹Primary market NYSE, NYSE American NYSE Arca only.
²(TRIN) A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand; above 1 indicates selling pressure.

Percentage Gainers...

Company	Symbol	Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg
Enigmatig	EGG	3.81	1.76	85.85	13.07	2.04	-33.3
T3 Defense	DFNS	24.00	10.90	83.21	1948.75	3.70	-97.5
INLIF	INLF	5.30	2.02	61.59	4599.04	2.12	-99.8
Baiya International Group	BIYA	6.44	2.27	54.44	207.25	1.91	-96.7
Trinity Biotech ADR	TRIB	12.45	3.30	36.07	103.20	7.94	-38.4
rYojbaba	RYOJ	4.99	1.19	31.32	11.43	1.56	...
Apimeds Pharma US	APUS	8.00	1.71	27.19	59.70	5.44	-61.0
Itron	ITRI	107.02	22.24	26.23	142.00	77.77	-21.5
Kiniksa Pharmaceuticals	KNSA	79.44	15.91	25.03	81.97	26.51	193.8
MapLight Therapeutics	MPLT	12.31	2.41	24.28	40.43	9.10	...
ProMIS Neurosciences	PMN	14.52	2.80	23.89	27.40	6.27	-35.5
Defiance Tgt 2x Lg OSCR	OSCX	118.29	21.51	22.22	136.00	17.63	...
Leverage 2X Lg OSCR Dly	OSCG	30.91	5.58	22.02	35.14	4.47	...
Lucid Group	LCID	7.90	1.40	21.54	29.60	2.37	-71.7
Wearable Devices	WLDS	3.83	0.65	20.44	102.60	1.30	-73.9

Volume Movers

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	% chg from 65-day avg	Latest Session Close	% chg	52-Week High	Low
General Purpose Acqn	GPAC	1,983	12869	10.02	...	10.03	9.86
Invest Green Acquisition	IGAC	874	10204	10.03	...	10.05	9.82
Highview Merger CIA	HVMC	1,356	9621	10.19	...	10.20	9.93
CSLM Digital Asset III	KOYN	814	8158	10.18	0.10	10.20	9.85
PeakShares RMR Prime Eq	PRMR	470	5342	27.42	-0.27	28.61	22.80
Meshflow Acquisition	MESH	1,131	5279	10.01	-0.10	10.05	9.87
ProMIS Neurosciences	PMN	1,768	3305	14.52	23.89	27.40	6.27
Invc MSCI North AmClimt	KLMN	11,220	2486	30.47	0.18	31.19	25.58
Willow Lane Acqn II C I A	WLII	452	2215	10.25	...	10.50	9.86
Firy	FIRY	21,596	1676	9.84	17.70	20.00	2.23

* Common stocks priced at \$2 a share or more with an average volume over 65 trading days of at least 5,000 shares. †Has traded fewer than 65 days

International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Net chg	Latest % chg	YTD % chg
World	MSCI ACWI	1104.12	-3.96	-0.36	8.8
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	460.51	-6.31	-1.35	9.4
	MSCI World	4799.90	4.23	0.09	8.3
	MSCI Emerging Markets	1582.53	-60.80	-3.70	12.7
Americas	MSCI AC Americas	2817.74	6.650	0.24	8.6
Canada	S&P/TSX Comp	35749.70	181.56	0.51	12.7
Brazil	Bovespa	176564.75	1230.29	0.70	9.6
Chile	S&P IPSA	5480.20	-41.80	-0.76	1.1
Mexico	S&P/BMV IPC	67307.54	149.63	0.22	4.7
EMEA	STOXX Europe 600	646.89	2.27	0.35	9.2
Eurozone	Euro STOXX	664.34	0.16	0.02	8.5
Belgium	Bel-20	5745.96	38.55	0.68	13.1
Denmark	OMX Copenhagen 20	1644.67	22.76	1.40	2.3
France	CAC 40	8458.78	52.72	0.63	3.8
Germany	DAX	25464.01	102.98	0.41	4.0
Israel	Tel Aviv	4086.59	-75.22	-1.81	12.5
Italy	FTSE MIB	51698.19	-356.76	-0.69	15.0
Netherlands	AEX	1092.50	11.37	1.05	14.8
Norway	Oslo Bors All-Share	2358.04	7.46	0.32	21.5
South Africa	FTSE/JSE All-Share	109904.12	-205.48	-0.19	-5.1
Spain	IBEX 35	19727.00	-14.30	-0.07	14.0
Sweden	OMX Stockholm	1121.09	4.80	0.43	7.2
Switzerland	Swiss Market	14571.33	149.36	1.04	9.8
Turkey	BIST 100	13687.86	-86.91	-0.63	21.5
U.K.	FTSE 100	10871.02	89.27	0.83	9.5
U.K.	FTSE 250	24004.78	106.68	0.45	6.8

Asia-Pacific	MSCI AC Asia Pacific	257.02	-9.00	-3.38	12.9
Australia	S&P/ASX 200	8947.80	53.84	0.61	2.7
China	Shanghai Composite	3813.31	-44.93	-1.16	-3.9
Hong Kong	Hang Seng	25310.85	103.67	0.41	-1.2
India	BSE Sensex	76765.92	-69.86	-0.09	-9.9
Japan	NIKKEI 225	62364.92	-2566.27	-3.95	23.9
Singapore	Straits Times	5616.11	-4.13	-0.07	20.9
South Korea	KOSPI	6023.66	-732.09	-10.84	42.9
Taiwan	TAIEX	41603.36	-2030.83	-4.65	43.6
Thailand	SET	1624.47	...	Closed	29.0

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Percentage Losers

Company	Symbol	Latest session			High	52-Week	
		Close	Net chg	% chg		Low	% chg
AirWA	YYAI	0.90	-2.10	-70.12	10576.80	0.85	-99.99
Instinct Bio TechnolCo	BIOT	1.33	-1.41	-51.46	50.00	1.30	-89.2
Enlivenx	ENLV	2.24	-2.02	-47.42	31.50	2.08	-88.1
Replimune Group	REPL	5.35	-3.28	-38.01	12.50	1.50	-68.8
Callan JMB	CJMB	1.85	-0.85	-31.48	5.61	0.65	-61.7
Co-Diagnostics	CODX	1.41	-0.63	-30.88	46.50	1.26	-83.1
D.Boral ARC Acqui CI A	BCAR	5.66	-2.13	-27.34	11.17	5.63	...
Travelzoo	TZOO	7.57	-2.64	-25.86	12.39	4.72	-30.0
Amkor Technology	AMKR	45.69	-15.02	-24.74	96.68	20.87	-11.2
Leverage 2x LG GLW Dly	GLWG	9.90	-3.19	-24.37	51.00	7.82	...
Advanced Biomed	ADBV	10.88	-3.48	-24.23	24.23	3.61	-21.2
NIP Group AdR	NIPG	15.18	-4.70	-23.64	68.40	4.20	-75.9
SharonAI Holdings	SHAZ	44.98	-13.81	-23.49	178.00	1.90	499.7
Leverage 2x LG BE Dly	BEG	22.01	-6.56	-22.96	121.25	10.89	...
Virtuix Holdings	VTIX	1.69	-0.49	-22.48	92.74	1.47	...

MARKETS

WEC	113.61	-0.21	ZTO Express	ZTO	23.93	0.07
WPC	3.61	-0.60	ZebraTech	ZBRA	28.40	19.83
WAB	305.79	4.89	ZimmerBiomet	ZBH	95.52	3.68
WMT	113.10	1.36	Zions Bancorp	ZION	69.52	1.00
WY	25.61	0.33	Zoetis	ZTS	77.51	0.95
WVG	28.76	1.15	ZoomComms	ZM	91.48	0.26
WCN	169.22	-0.13	Zscaler	ZS	151.63	4.23

Symbol	Amount		Frq		Payable / Record
	Yld %	New/Old			
OFAL		110			/Jul31
YAAS		15			/Jul30
NTB	3.3	.50	Q	Aug26/Aug12	
BLX	4.6	68.75	Q	Aug25/Aug12	
EQNR	3.0	321	Q	Nov25/Nov16	
GLOPQ	9.6	59091	Q	Sep15/Sep16	
G	2.2	.1875	Q	Sep24/Sep10	
GGAL	..	..04899	Q	Aug10/Aug12	
HIHO	..	.05	Q	Sep22/Aug08	
NE	5.1	.50	Q	Sep24/Sep03	
RYAA	1.2	45448	SA	Sep28/Aug07	

as of 4:30 p.m. ET
Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

ly; Q: quarterly; r: revised; SA: semiannual

50: spin-off

Latest	Week ago	-52-Week high	-52-Week low
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Latest	Value Traded	–52-Week– High Low
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	Vault	Cing	Rest		Vault	Cing	Rest
221.83	1.38	20.0		Welltn	46.24	0.07	4.5
143.00	+58.16	6.3		VANGUARD INDEX FUNDS			
142.78	+49.09	16.3		ExtrdInstP	444.74	-0.02	14.3
124.75	-0.71	13.4		ExtrdInstP	444.74	-0.02	14.3
124.85	-0.71	13.4		McDpGrAdm1	126.45	0.42	0.6
24.01	0.01	0.0		McDpGrAdm1	147.07	+1.01	18.2
9.55	+0.03	0.0		SmvAdmAdm1	106.16	-1.06	18.3
19.19	+0.03	0.0		TotBtd2	9.41	-0.02	-0.1
14.64	-0.32	10.7		TotInstBdInst	178.51	-1.27	10.7
22.31	+0.88	9.2		TotInstPld	178.56	-1.27	10.7
12.83	-0.12	12.0		TotSt	178.05	+0.33	9.8
19.28	-0.21	-3.0		VANGUARD INTL FUNDS			
86.95	+47.17	17.9		DevWtMndInst	22.36	-0.13	12.1
17.71	+151.10	19.9		DevWtMndInst	22.36	-0.13	12.1
63.15	+0.41	4.3		FTScnt	50.75	-0.11	8.1
78.65	+1.14	12.5		GrWthInst	257.29	-0.25	2.0
82.99	+18.18	12.5		InstPsel	9.25	-0.02	-0.5
FIDS				InstIndx	594.90	-1.25	9.2
32.14	+0.29	5.8		InstPsl	594.90	-1.26	9.2
36.37	-0.09	8.2		InstTstPsl	122.73	+0.23	9.2
46.57	-0.01	6.9		MidCapInst	89.02	-0.37	12.9
30.54	+0.13	5.7		MidCpInstP	439.04	-1.82	12.9
28.49	+0.01	3.8		SmCapInst	142.78	+0.49	16.9
20.98	+0.01	5.2		SmCapInstP	412.12	+1.42	16.3
44.91	-0.01	6.1		StpInst	24.87	-0.01	0.6
29.27	-0.02	6.9		StpInstScnt	24.87	-0.01	0.6
53.79	-0.04	7.7		TotBtdInst	9.55	+0.03	-0.1
37.67	-0.04	8.4		TotBtdInst2	9.41	-0.02	-0.1
37.64	-0.08	9.2		TotBtdInstP	9.55	+0.03	-0.1
66.63	-0.09	9.3		TotBtdInstScnt	28.80	-0.04	0.5
72.29	-0.10	9.3		TotStInst	178.12	+0.34	9.8
				ValueInst	86.95	+0.47	17.9
WCM Focus Funds							

HEARD_{ON THE} STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

Big Tech Stocks Price in Miracle on Costs

Analysts’ models are assuming new efficiencies, but some of the numbers look too good to be true

Wall Street’s forecasts for Big Tech require a major leap of faith: that the biggest AI hyperscalers can boost revenue much faster than the costs of running their businesses. Some of the numbers look too good to be true.

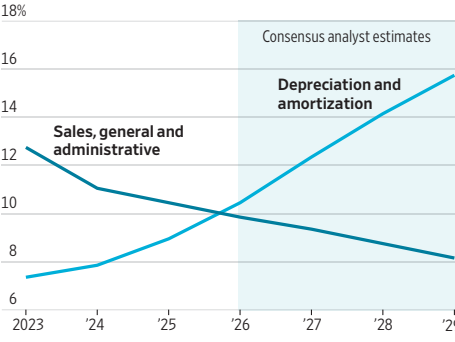
Investors are already on edge about these companies’ soaring capital expenditures related to artificial intelligence. S&P this month cut **Oracle’s** credit rating to one notch above junk. **Alphabet** shares slipped last week after the Google parent boosted its capex estimates. **Microsoft** and **Meta Platforms** report earnings Wednesday, while **Amazon.com’s** results are due Thursday.

The bullish earnings narrative requires these companies to achieve newfound operating efficiency even as they spend trillions of dollars in capex over the next few years. The premise is evident in the consensus estimates for the five hyperscalers when combined as a group.

Analysts project that operating margins will improve to about 31% in calendar 2029 from 27% last year, according to data compiled by Visible Alpha. This would be the highest for the group collectively since Meta went public in 2012. Half of that improvement hinges on sales, general and administrative expenses declining to about 8% of revenue from 10% over the same period, while revenue almost doubles. The analysts’ projections show each company’s SG&A falling as a percentage of revenue, helping sustain or expand operating margins.

This scenario leaves little room

SG&A and D&A expenses, as percentages of revenue, for Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft and Oracle, combined



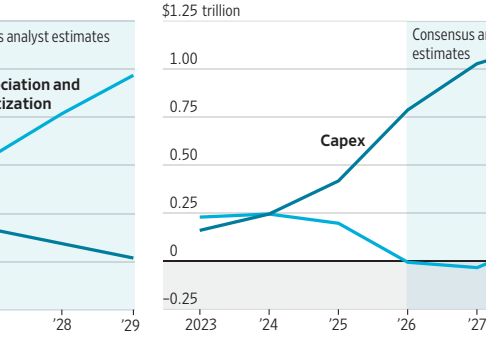
*Cash flow from operating activities minus capex. Note: Figures are calendarized.

for error. Depreciation expenses will soar in the next few years because of all the new buildings and equipment. Those are part of operating income under generally accepted accounting principles. And if those costs land higher than projected, relying on overhead to shrink as a share of revenue won’t be enough to bridge the gap.

A two-percentage-point drop in SG&A might seem modest. But with combined annual revenue expected to top \$3 trillion in three years, it compounds rapidly. The shift means the five hyperscalers would spend \$77 billion less on corporate operations in 2029 than if overhead remained at its 2025 share of revenue. That efficiency squeeze is one of the crucial engines driving the margin forecasts.

But with some of the SG&A esti-

Capital expenditures and free cash flow*



Source: Visible Alpha

mates, another possible explanation is that Wall Street analysts locked in their revenue and earnings estimates based on management guidance, then reverse-engineered the expense projections so they would fit.

The math behind the earnings can’t work unless SG&A declines significantly as a share of revenue. So it is telling how analysts handle the expense lines in the middle.

Consider the analyst estimates for Oracle and how widely dispersed they are relative to the average. The standard deviation for their fiscal 2029 revenue forecasts is a narrow 3% of the average estimate, according to Visible Alpha. It is 4% for the nonstandard earnings metric that is tailored to match Oracle’s long-term guidance.

But look at the divergence in the

expense forecasts. The standard deviations swell to 17% for sales and marketing costs, 25% for general and administrative expenses, and 36% for depreciation. That indicates analysts are treating the middle of the income statement as a plug to reconcile the top and bottom.

All told, the consensus estimates envision Oracle’s operating margins holding steady at about 31% each year through fiscal 2029 and improving to 33% in fiscal 2030. Revenue soars, driven by anticipated business with **OpenAI**, and so do cost of goods sold and depreciation. But SG&A, while climbing in dollar terms, stair-steps down to 6% of revenue in fiscal 2030 from 15% in fiscal 2026, which ended May 31.

Kevin Koharki, a Purdue University accounting professor and

founder of CAE Consulting, says the SG&A estimates across the group strain credulity. “Whenever growth is this fast, there’s got to be some strong positive correlation between SG&A and revenue,” he said. “It just seems like the analysts, in order to keep the operating margins steady or slightly growing, are assuming that whatever depreciation increases by, we’re going to see a direct offset through SG&A. I can’t think of a scenario where that’s ever happened before.”

Implicit in the analysts’ models is a belief that Big Tech can use AI to unlock rapid productivity gains, allowing revenue to grow much faster than overhead. Bringing in vast amounts of new business historically requires larger sales teams, customer support and administrative capacity. If AI tools fail to drive the hoped-for efficiencies, corporate expenses will scale with revenue, and the projected margin benefits won’t materialize.

The expenses hit cash, not just earnings. Most of SG&A consists of cash outlays for costs such as payroll, commissions and marketing. Overruns would reduce the operating cash flow needed to fund the AI build-out, making it more likely the companies would have to issue additional debt or sell stock to cover shortfalls. Amazon and Oracle have already turned free-cash-flow negative. So has Alphabet, which halted stock buybacks and issued equity to fund its spending.

It will take more than spreadsheet mechanics to make these businesses truly more efficient.

—Jonathan Weil

Growth Is Off the Menu at Starbucks

Two years ago, **Starbucks** investors were having a lousy day following another depressing set of quarterly results. Two weeks later they had their best day ever.

News of Brian Niccol’s hiring as chief executive boosted the coffee chain’s market value by \$20 billion, or more than 25%, overnight. It’s a testament to how disillusioned investors had become, but also to the former **Chipotle** boss’s Mr. Fixit reputation.

Now the buzz is wearing off.

As Starbucks prepares to report fiscal third-quarter earnings Wednesday, one financial figure looks much better than in July 2024: Global comparable-store sales rose 6.2% in the second quarter, and analysts at UBS think they could have risen about 7%

during the third. The same figure was negative 3% in the quarter before Niccol took over.

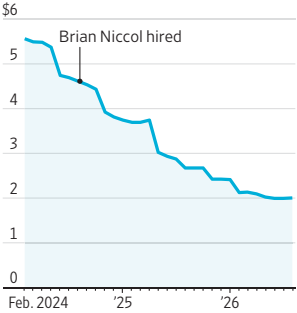
Look past that, though, and a key ingredient is in short supply: profits.

Analyst expectations for earnings per share this fiscal year have dropped by more than half since Niccol’s arrival. The chain’s trailing 12-month operating margin is one-third lower.

Improving Starbucks isn’t cheap. A modest fiscal second-quarter margin improvement had much to do with temporary factors—less drag from store opening costs and the accounting treatment of the China business being marked as “held for sale.”

Niccol is a decisive leader and a seasoned operator. Selling a major-

Analyst consensus earnings-per-share forecast for 2026



Source: FactSet

ity stake in those once-promising Chinese operations and bringing

the customer experience in North America closer to its roots may well have been among the best choices on an unappetizing menu. He has additional levers to pull, such as further upping its food game and attracting more customers in the typically slower afternoon.

The chain’s huge North American digital and physical presence are still unmatched. Unfortunately, it has lost a lot of its cachet. Starbucks became so efficient and impersonal that customers began to wonder why they were paying a premium for something they could make at home, or at least get with more flair elsewhere.

The Chinese experience shows how perceptions can change. Former boss Howard Schultz once expected Starbucks China to over-

take the U.S. operation. But it lost its top spot and was forced to cut prices last summer in a market it had basically created.

The value of the China business, including cash received and future licensing fees, was pegged at less than \$14 billion or about 10% of the company’s current enterprise value. Around 19% of Starbucks cafes globally are in China.

Counting China, the global store count has risen at one-third of its previous pace the past two years. Fewer net store openings make it easier for comparable-store sales to rebound.

There’s a reason the stock has been stuck in neutral for five years: It’s gone from pricing in a lot of growth to much less of it.

—Spencer Jakab

Which Tech Giant Will Blink First on AI Spending?

Investors are practically begging AI’s big spenders to blink. Who will be first?

Markets are making the option of pulling in the reins—or at least keeping capital spending steady—tantalizing.

Google parent **Alphabet’s** stock fell almost 7% after it reported quarterly earnings last week that included a \$10 billion hike in capital spending to around \$200 billion this year. The spending put Alphabet into free-cash-flow-negative territory for the first time since its IPO a couple of decades ago.

Investors weren’t kind to **Tesla**, either. While its outlays on AI are

nothing compared with those of Big Tech, an upgrade to \$5.8 billion of spending in the second quarter put investors on edge. Tesla’s stock was down about 12% the following day.

Those developments make this week all the more interesting. **Microsoft** and **Meta Platforms**—two other top AI spenders—report quarterly results on Wednesday. Both have big spending plans and big ambitions. But both know that investors are skittish about a spending surge that has yet to deliver returns good enough to justify the outlays.

Meta may have the biggest incentive to back down. Lacking a

cloud-computing operation or a corporate-software franchise, it has fewer ways than its peers to translate today’s AI spending into tomorrow’s revenue.

It is also more financially stretched; its debt-to-equity ratio is higher than Microsoft’s or Alphabet’s, and it is unclear how it can keep raising spending without borrowing a ton more.

Meta’s AI strategy, moreover, has been all over the place, marked by technical missteps and delays, frequent reorganizations and leadership changes. And its other non-social-media pursuits, from virtual-reality headsets to smart Ray-Ban

glasses, involve lots of spending but not much in the way of financial returns.

Meta should choose pursuits where it is making good returns and ditch the others, Needham analyst Laura Martin said in a note on Friday. “We believe Meta’s strategy diffusion wastes shareholder capital,” she wrote.

History suggests investors could force Meta’s hand. Back in 2022, when the company was spending heavily on the so-called metaverse, it reported dismal third-quarter results. Its Reality Labs unit, which houses its VR hardware efforts, had a \$9.4 billion operating loss in the

first nine months of the year.

The company’s stock lost almost one-quarter of its value the following day. Meta responded by laying off staff at Reality Labs and cutting costs—although the unit continued to lose money at a rapid clip as its focus shifted toward AI.

It is increasingly possible to envision a similar scenario if investors punish Meta over further hikes in capital spending. At the same, Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg is a true believer in AI. Unless others are already doing so, it won’t be easy for him to close Meta’s pocket-book.

—Asa Fitch

MONEY & INVESTING

Stock Spotlight

United Parcel Service

The company said restructuring efforts are paying off, but profit fell, hurt by a large after-tax charge tied to workforce reductions, as well as higher fuel costs. The stock dropped 6.6%.

Samsung, SK Hynix

Samsung shares dropped 13% and SK Hynix fell 14.7% in Asia as part of a broader selloff amid mounting doubts over the AI boom. Over in the U.S., Micron Technology, Intel and other

chip stocks also posted declines.

Coca-Cola

Shares climbed 5% after the beverages company announced higher profit and sales in the second quarter.

Unilever

Shares in the consumer-goods company jumped 7.9% after it bumped its full-year outlook and said quarterly sales volume surged to more than a 16-year high.

Mercedes-Benz Group

Shares in the luxury carmaker gained almost 3% after its second-quarter

results beat investor expectations, even as it cut its sales forecast amid a worsening Chinese market.

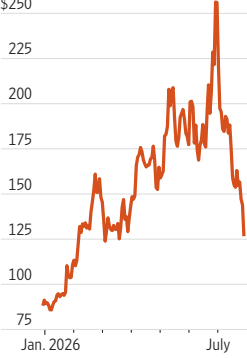
WEDNESDAY’S EVENTS:

◆ Federal Reserve meeting: Fed Chairman Kevin Warsh will hold a press conference at 2:30 p.m. ET, following the FOMC interest-rate decision at 2.

EARNINGS EXPECTED:

Microsoft, Meta, Procter & Gamble, Qualcomm, Starbucks, Robinhood

Corning share price, year to date



Source: FactSet

Corning Stock Takes Big Fall

Corning issued disappointing third-quarter sales guidance, as growth is being squeezed by production limits on its booming AI connectivity products and broader drags in consumer electronics. While demand for next-generation data centers re-

This Day in Market History

On this day in 1869, the New York Stock Exchange was formed from the merger of the New York Stock & Ex-

changes hot, executives signaled that output is capped by current manufacturing limits. Corning expects core sales for the current quarter to increase by about 16%, to between \$4.9 billion and \$5 billion. Analysts expect \$5 billion for the quarter. Shares fell 12% to \$126.01 on Tuesday, the largest percentage decrease since July.

—Adriano Marchese

change Board with the Open Board and the Government Board (where Treasury bonds were traded).

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BARRON'S
WEALTH & ASSET MANAGEMENT GROUP JULY 29, 2023

An illustration of three women of different ethnicities ascending a staircase. The staircase is composed of large, stylized hands in shades of purple, pink, and orange, reaching up from the bottom. The woman on the left is wearing a white t-shirt and orange pants. The woman in the middle is wearing a light yellow blazer and pants. The woman on the right is wearing a white shirt and purple pants. They are all walking upwards, symbolizing growth and progress. The background is a solid light purple.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA PARINI

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN

Wealth management looks quite different today, Weikes says. Women's mentorship networks have taken root throughout the industry, and role models have become plentiful. The question is whether those sorts of wins will be enough to lift the female portion of the advisor population above 20% or so, where it has been stuck for years. They certainly won't hurt, but an even more important development might be the wealth management industry's steady transition from solo practices to advisory

ams, which offer a range of roles that suit different temperaments and talents. "With teams, you can step into roles that just didn't exist before," says Weikes.

Barron's annual Top 100 Women Financial Advisors ranking is dominated by women who are on teams. As the teams get bigger—they average 15 members—and add more partners, they are becoming more horizontal in their ownership, meaning that no one person owns 65% or more of the practice. This year, 36 teams are horizontal, while 64 are vertical.

The big movers on this year's list include two *Barron's* Hall of Fame advisors: Melissa Corrado-Harrison of UBS in Denver jumped 25 spots to No. 15, while Melissa Spickler of Merrill Wealth Management in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., climbed 13 places to No. 24. Jana Shoulders of Mariner in Tulsa, Okla., rose 23 places to No. 30.

The typical advisor on our list manages, along with her team, about \$10.5 billion of client assets, up from \$7.9 billion for last year's honorees. Annual revenue per team is nearly \$20 million.

The statistics on women in wealth management are well known by now. For a decade or more, the percentage of advisors who are women has ranged from the high teens to the mid-20s, depending on the source. BlackRock, the asset-management firm, puts the current number at 18%, for

A Gap That Matters

Aside from questions of equal opportunity, a skewed gender breakdown costs the industry a diversity of perspectives when it comes to client relationships, team decisions, and business strategy. This problem persists as more assets move into women's hands. Through generational wealth transfer, entrepreneurship, and other means, women are increasingly becoming primary high-net-worth advisory clients.

Surveys show that many women prefer a female financial advisor, and some complain that some male advisors can be condescending. This can happen in cases where the female client is knowledgeable about investing but feels that a male advisor is "mansplaining." At the

Continued on the following page

Share of wealth management professionals ages 20 to 30 who are women, according to Fintrix.

TOP 100 WOMEN FINANCIAL ADVISORS 2026

Continued from the previous page



ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA PARINI

“Our industry has to reflect our client base and our population—not just women but minorities, as well....It’s an important and ongoing effort, and we can’t let up.”

Shannon Reid, President, Osaic

family finances is becoming more and more important,” she says.

“Our industry has to reflect our client base and our population—not just women but minorities, as well,” says Shannon Reid, president of Scottsdale, Ariz.-based independent broker-dealer firm Osaic. “It’s an important and ongoing effort, and we can’t let up.”

Some wealth management firms are acing the gender diversity test. At LNW, 57% of the more than 170 employees are women, and 50% of executives are women, including CEO Kristen Bauer. The firm’s “People” page, with photos of its employees, is a big asset, says Wigen. “It’s very beneficial in recruiting and in new client acquisition,” she says.

To fill out the ranks of female advisors, those in the industry “need to be better storytellers,” says Corina Davis, who leads a \$1.5 billion-asset Merrill Wealth Management practice in Seattle. The persistent misunderstanding that wealth management consists of selling investments is keeping young women away, she says.

Until the late 1990s, just about the only way into the brokerage industry was to get on the phone, start dialing, withstand countless rejections, and build a book of business one client at a time. “Many women shied away from the career because it wasn’t salary and bonus,” says Weikes. “A business where you eat what you kill isn’t for everybody.”

The reality is that the business for decades has been trending toward long-term financial planning, with investments increasingly playing a supporting role. “It’s not really a career of just understanding markets and building portfolios,” says Davis. “It’s actually about leadership and relationships, problem solving, and helping families.”

Women are well suited for the role of modern financial advisor, and vice versa, says Osaic’s Reid. “The skills some of our best advisors have include knowing how to empathize with people and talk to people,” she says. “And while being a financial advisor is sort of a 24/7 job, it’s also extremely flexible: You can go to school plays, you can go to games, you can volunteer, all those things that are important to people.”

The Team Difference

That message hasn’t been enough to attract more women to the industry. “We’ve always promoted flexibility and autonomy,” says Betsy Pakenas, who leads a Morgan Stanley practice in Frederick, Md. The shift toward teams has helped bring more women into the field, but it complicates work/life balance, she suggests.

“You’re now on teams, and that means you’re accountable to others,” Pakenas says. “We need to lead with different descriptors, like ‘problem-solving,’ ‘people-facing,’ ‘fast-paced,’ and ‘energetic.’ ”

Pakenas, one of the elite team leaders in the industry, entered the business in 1998, when she joined her father, a stockbroker. Her father saw the emerging shift toward financial planning but loved investments, so he asked his daughter to earn her planning designations so that “we could maintain professional relevancy and go from there,” Pakenas says.

Today, Pakenas runs a team of 15 people with diverse specialties, who work together to serve each client. Pakenas says she shares “equity and opportunity” with her team, and that its members are far more collaborative than many male-led teams have historically been.

Ironically, she developed this approach because she didn’t fit in with the male branch managers and other executives who might have served as leadership role models. “When my manager was a golfer, I wouldn’t be included because I didn’t golf, and then I had a manager who was a hunter, and I wasn’t included because I didn’t hunt,” she says. “But one of the positives was that my imagination was free to roam about how I’d lead my team.”

The rise of teams has created new, less harsh ways to enter the business. That in turn has made it more friendly to women, says Weikes. “It takes a village to manage clients in the ultrahigh-net-worth space, especially when you run a family office practice,” she says. “There are many different roles on teams, instead of just one role that might not be the right fit for every female graduating from college.”

A young person looking for a marketing and communications role in the wealth management industry may now find a place on a team that didn’t exist in an earlier era. There are pure financial planning roles that don’t involve prospecting for clients. If pure business development is a candidate’s calling, those jobs exist, too.

Women can’t fix the field’s gender disparity by themselves, says Pakenas. Men make most of the hiring decisions by far, she notes. They need to hire the best candidates for each job, but a diversity of skill sets needs to be a factor in hiring decisions, she says.

Wealth management firms are also missing a golden opportunity to shape the narrative about careers in the industry because they aren’t recruiting heavily in colleges and universities, argues Weikes. “Wealth management hasn’t done a great job on the recruiting side,” she says. “When you see recruitment come through, it’s always in investment banking, it’s in sales and trading, it’s in research. It’s never in wealth management.”

Ultimately, to get more women into wealth management as advisors and leaders, the industry needs to promote more women, says Wigen. Talking about the benefits of the career will ultimately fall on deaf ears if female candidates feel they’ll be in a small minority or get stuck in administrative or client-service roles. “People have to start seeing it happen,” she says. “Just saying we’re doing it isn’t going to work.” ■

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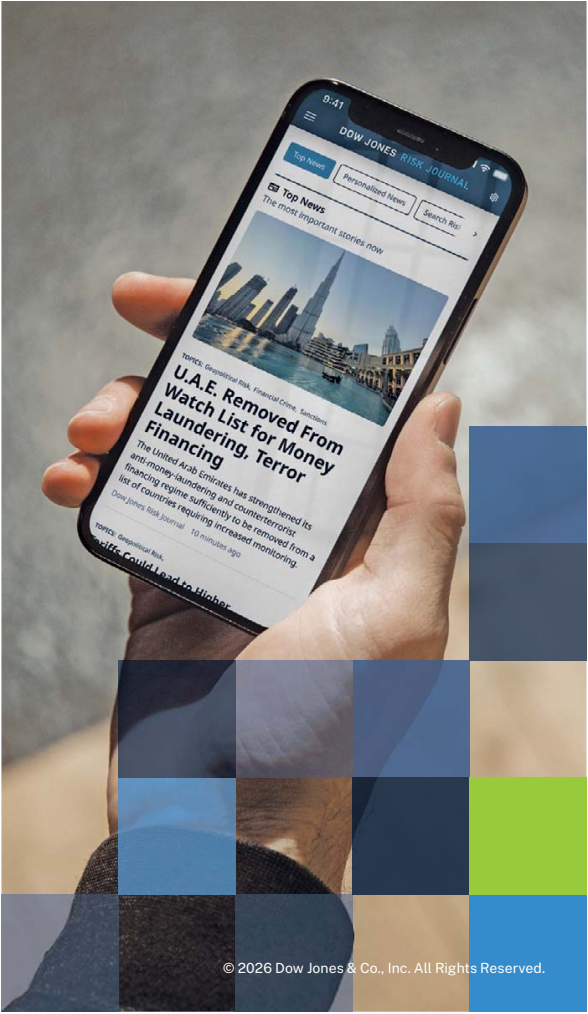
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BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

A Top Advisor’s Advice: It’s Time to Be More Selective

Amy Li, whose team manages \$9.4 billion in assets, says that broad-based market gains may be a thing of the past, requiring more careful portfolio construction.

BY PATTI DOMM

Amy Li, a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley, arrived in the U.S. from China in 2008 with a suitcase and a violin. As a student at Ohio State University, she found that the suitcase was initially more useful. But it was her study of violin that helped guide her to success as a financial advisor.

With wealth management, as with symphonies, “no single instrument carries the music,” says Li, the 40th-ranked advisor in *Barron’s* Top 100 Women Financial Advisors list for 2026. “The beauty really comes from bringing every different voice into harmony.”

Li found that her practice grew as she connected clients’ lawyers, accountants, and other advisors across continents and in different languages to develop cohesive financial plans for ultrawealthy families.

Li now advises 50 families, and her clients have a typical net worth of \$500 million. In an interview with *Barron’s*, she discusses investing selectively in artificial intelligence and private assets, constructing globally diversified portfolios, and the growing role for women in finance. An edited version of the conversation follows.

***Barron’s:* With stocks near highs right now and the 10-year Treasury yield close to 4.5%, what is your market view? And what are you advising clients right now?**

Amy Li: I think we’re going through one of the biggest investment regime shifts I’ve seen in my career. It’s driven by three structural forces: artificial intelligence, a higher cost of capital driven by government debt, and a more fragmented geopolitical landscape. Those aren’t short-term headlines. They are long-term shifts that are changing how capital gets allocated globally.

What are your clients talking about now?

One question I get every day now is whether AI has become another tech bubble. I actually think that’s the wrong question. I think the biggest opportunity isn’t AI itself; it’s the second-order effect of AI. The first phase rewarded the companies building AI infrastructure. The next phase is likely to reward the companies that are actually using AI to improve their margins, whether that’s industrial, automation, software, healthcare, or energy infrastructure.

So, the advice we’re giving clients is actually pretty simple. Stay invested, but become more selective. The easy, beta-driven market of the past decade is probably behind us, and going forward, I think portfolio construction matters much more. That means making sure you’re not overly concentrated, taking advantage of fixed income again as the source of income and stability, and using alternatives where appropriate as an important source of return.

Where do you see opportunities?

The U.S. remains the center of gravity for foundational AI companies—chips, cloud infrastructure, software, Silicon Valley innovation. But I don’t think the opportunity is limited to the U.S., because the AI story is entering a second phase. The first phase was about building AI infrastructure. The next phase is about applying it—agentic software,



PHOTOGRAPH BY BILLY H.C. KWOK

humanoid robotics, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, drug discovery. That’s a much more global story.

The U.S. has the platform companies and software ecosystem; many Asian markets have the deep manufacturing, robotics, and engineering capabilities that phase two actually depends on. Through the founders I work with, I see AI innovation happening in more than one geography, not concentrated in a single place. For investors, the key is to look past the AI headlines and find where it actually translates into productivity, earnings growth, and durable competitive advantage—wherever that happens to be.

How do alternative investments fit into your clients’ portfolios?

I think alts are no longer just nice to have for qualified investors. They actually have become a day-to-day core part of portfolio construction. We also have to be careful. Private credit offers almost double the income of the public market, but underwriting at this point matters more than ever.

Infrastructure and real estate are increasingly relevant, given AI-driven power demand, the data-center build-out, and energy reshoring. Many of these are private companies. Morgan Stanley has built a robust direct private-market investment platform. That offers retail clients what used to be only institution-

al access to those companies. But investors have to be aware that companies are staying private for longer.

What I tell my clients is that alternatives are attractive, but they aren’t magic. They have liquidity constraints, fees, and manager selection risk. It’s about fit and looking at their whole, holistic family balance sheet.

Putting portfolios together is more complicated with private investments involved, yes?

The portfolio today is more complicated than it used to be. A decade ago, many families could rely heavily on investing in public equities, on low rates, and on market data. Today they are dealing with high rates, private markets, alternatives, and geopolitical risk.

For my clients, they live in different continents and jurisdictions. They face tax consequences. Also, in succession they have to think about family governance and more like an outsourced [chief investment officer] function. It becomes about setting the right asset allocation, liquidity policy, risk framework, manager selection, and governance process for the entire family balance sheet—not just one portfolio.

OUR
ADVISOR
RANKING
AT A
GLANCE

Amy
Li

#40

“I think we’re going through one of the biggest investment regime shifts I’ve seen in my career. It’s driven by three structural forces: artificial intelligence, a higher cost of capital driven by government debt, and a more fragmented geopolitical landscape.”

So, is there an “Amy formula” that you now talk to investors about? It clearly isn’t the classic 60/40 portfolio of stocks and bonds.

None of my clients have the same portfolio. It has always catered to the needs of their entire family balance sheet.

Tell me about yourself. How did you decide to become an advisor?

I came to the U.S. with one suitcase and a violin. The suitcase was useful. But the violin—people laugh about that. It seemed far less practical for a career in finance at that time, but looking back, it probably represented a karma I didn’t recognize at that time.

I transferred to the Ohio State University in 2008, when I was 18, from Beijing, possibly the worst year to major in finance—learning about efficient markets while Lehman Brothers was collapsing in real time. It was less a classroom education than a front-row seat to history. After graduation, the job market was pretty difficult, but I was fortunate. I landed my first job as an auditor with a boutique accounting firm. Then I did proxy research, and then worked at a small fixed-income firm. So, I had no Wall Street networks, no shortcuts.

How did you build your client base?

Every client I’ve worked with has been built as one relationship at a time. Early on, I thought success meant being the most technical person in the room. Then I realized that many of my clients—entrepreneurs building businesses across Asia and the U.S.—already had highly capable lawyers, accountants, bankers, and investment professionals around them. The problem wasn’t a lack of advice. It was that they might have five different advisors giving them five different opinions, sometimes in two different languages. What they needed wasn’t another expert; they needed someone who could connect those perspectives into one coherent strategy.

That’s when I realized my background wasn’t something to overcome. It was actually my biggest advantage. Wealth management isn’t about having the loudest opinion or the smartest investment idea, but rather helping families bring investments, taxes, estate planning, and family goals into one coherent strategy.

So, seven years later, after building a multibillion-dollar practice, I went back for a Wharton executive M.B.A. because my clients never stopped learning, and I didn’t want to be the advisor who thinks she has all the answers. I think great wealth management isn’t about predicting the future. It’s about helping families make confident decisions in an increasingly interconnected world.

Your journey has been unique. How do you see things changing for your female clients and women in the industry?

One of the most important trends is that women are becoming more influential in financial decision making. I see women founders, executives, investors, and even within families, the wife often becomes the main decision maker.

Also with next-generation wealth, especially Asian, a lot of it had passed to men or the boys in the family. Now the girls have a seat. For a long time, I think the industry underestimated how much women wanted to understand the full picture. Many women—myself included—don’t want to just see the performance numbers on the surface. We want to learn the context and then see the planning. Because of this, there are tremendous opportunities for women advisors and for women financial decision makers.

Thank you, Amy. 🙏

Amy Li, Morgan Stanley Wealth Mgmt, San Francisco	
Team Assets	\$9.4 billion
Typical Account Size	\$100 million
Typical Net Worth	\$500 million

Building a Foundation for Long-Term Success

Barron’s No. 39-ranked woman advisor attributes her success to being reliable—and communicating well.

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN

Veteran financial advisor Corina Davis doesn’t think client relationships are cemented by fat investment returns or “large sweeping wins.” Rather, “it’s actually just showing up consistently, doing what you say you’re going to do, and communicating proactively,” says the Merrill advisor, who manages \$1.5 billion of assets with a Seattle-based team of six.

In a recent interview, Davis, who is *Barron’s* No. 39-ranked woman advisor in 2026, weighs in on clients’ use of arti-

ficial intelligence and on what clients are most concerned about today. And she argues that women in the industry need to spread the word about what wealth management careers are really like. The following is an edited version of the conversation.

***Barron’s:* Where are you from, and how did you become a financial advisor?**

Corina Davis: I’ve lived in Seattle my whole life. While attending University of Washington business school, in addition to lots of different internships, I worked part time for Bank of America as a teller, just a couple miles from the

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AT A
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Corina
Davis

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university. I got introduced to wealth management early on from two main forces. One was my father. I remember at age 13 he’d have me take 20% of my babysitting money, and we’d buy stocks together in a UTMA [Uniform Transfers to Minors Act] account. So, I learned early about saving 20% of your income, and the power of buying individual stocks.

That sparked my interest in finance and business. In college, working part time for the bank gave me a great introduction to the financial advisors who worked for the bank. I shadowed a gentleman named Brian, who let me sit in client meetings and just took me under his wing to learn the wealth management business. And then I went in that direction right out of college.

I was drawn to wealth management because it was this combination of ana-

lytical problem-solving but also having really meaningful relationships, which are two things I’m really good at. I’m helping clients make complex decisions and have confidence in the decisions they make, but at the same time, I love the markets. I love following changes in the economy and staying on top of trends.

Early on, I became a great educator to my clients. Many clients call me their family chief financial officer or their family financial advocate, and that’s kind of how I built my practice. I started as a single advisor, and now I have a six-person team that delivers a “family CFO” kind of experience. We offer investment management, tax planning, estate planning, and coordination with other partners, and provide ongoing guidance through all the big transitions in clients’ lives.

TOP 100 WOMEN FINANCIAL ADVISORS 2026



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHONA KASINGER

Was your dad in the financial industry?

No, he was a nurse anesthesiologist. But he was a good stockpicker. One of my first stocks was Microsoft. There was also Nike and Costco. I added to that Microsoft position through the years, and it was how I bought my first home out of college. The three of us kids were always taught to save and invest. That's actually a philosophy I use with my clients. I do a ton of financial education for my clients' kids. I think we work with over 65% of our clients' next gen.

How would you describe your target client?

Our clients are primarily successful executives. We work with a lot of first-generation business owners, who are often planning to transition their business to their kids.

What are the key services you provide in helping to facilitate those business transfers?

A lot of it is just planning with the business owner around what the exit is. Is the exit to a strategic buyer? That's a different conversation than if the exit is to a

family member. The first step is working with the owner to understand their goal, and then it's a lot of conversations for building a plan around their decision.

If the business is going to go to a family member, we step in early to ensure that that next generation becomes our client. It's in the best interest of the business owner to help educate that next generation about how to be a good steward of the business owner's wealth. Then we help facilitate partnerships with accountants and attorneys around planning that exit.

If a client is going to make a strategic sale, and I've had a few of those, then I want to be on my client's side of the table in every single meeting as their financial advocate. I make sure the number that they sell that business for is the right number, because we've done the planning for what that client needs, the tax impact, and all of that. It's so much fun to be involved in those transitions of wealth with the business owner.

What are your clients most concerned about today?

I have a lot of clients who make big career changes—I just had one moving from public-sector executive to the private



I would say innovation continues to be the most attractive long-term opportunity. That certainly involves artificial intelligence, and that includes companies in the large-cap space. But it's also all the infrastructure that supports AI, and maybe companies that have competitive advantages because of AI."

sector—so I'm really involved in helping these individuals make decisions around the cost to make that change in their career, and the potential reward or risk, or the tax impact.

Concentrated stock is a big concern right now: Do I diversify this concentrated stock position, and do I do it now? Do I do it later? Another big question I'm hearing is, how do I get my kids to be responsible with what they're about to inherit, and when do I tell them?

Where do you see the most interesting growth opportunities in the market right now?

I would say innovation continues to be the most attractive long-term opportunity. That certainly involves artificial intelligence, and that includes companies in the large-cap space. But it's also all the infrastructure that supports AI, and maybe companies that have competitive advantages because of AI. So, I think there are a lot of things in innovation to be excited about as an investor.

Speaking of AI, have you had clients reveal to you that they're getting investment guidance from chatbots?

Yes, I had one do that this morning. Clients are putting their portfolios into AI tools to see what they say. I think advisors should encourage our clients to use AI because it actually gets them more engaged with us. I get more interesting questions from clients than I did a couple of years ago, and I know they're being driven through the questions they're asking AI.

We should have a healthy curiosity about our clients using AI, because it will only make us more valuable. AI does a great job of providing information and maybe helping people with questions. But what AI doesn't do is help them make good judgments. And that's my job: to help them take this information they just received and apply it. With what I know about a client's family and the dynamics of that family, I can help them understand whether that information they've received is valuable. I can interpret it and help them figure out how it applies. For that reason, I think the best advisors are going to become more valuable.

Your team is composed of four women and two men. Are teams a way to get more women into the industry as a whole?

Every one of our team members has a specialization in how they work with clients. So, maybe we can tell the story better about what wealth management really is. There are different seats for different players with different skill sets. Maybe a woman doesn't want to be out there finding new business or picking stocks, but she's really good at keeping the relationship with the client, delivering financial plans, providing service. There's a seat for that in wealth management.

I also think it's my job, and the job of every other woman advisor out there, to share what this career is like. For me, it has been amazing. I absolutely love what I do. We get to follow our clients through their life cycle, from getting married to having kids to retiring. It's a true partnership relationship that's built through many years, and there's a high level of trust. There's so much reward in this career, because we get to be part of cli-

Helping Clients Weather Uncertainty

A veteran financial advisor offers her views on building a successful practice, maintaining a family-first focus, and managing topsy-turvy markets.

BY CHERYL WINOKUR MUNK

Holly Newman Kroft switched careers more than two decades ago, when she was single, anticipating that one day she would have both a family and a busy and successful career.

The managing director and senior wealth advisor at Neuberger Berman in New York shifted from corporate finance to personal finance because she was concerned that investment banking wouldn't allow her enough flexibility to be a present parent and build a successful career.

The move was a prudent one, allowing her to raise a family and build a thriving career. Newman Kroft, who is *Barron's* No. 3-ranked woman advisor and has worked at Neuberger Berman since 2005, works closely with ultrahigh-net-worth individuals and their families, developing personalized investment solutions and addressing estate-planning needs. "It's a real honor and a privilege to do what I do,

personally and professionally," she says, adding that women have to "own their priorities" when choosing a career path.

Newman Kroft recently spoke to *Barron's* about the rewards of a wealth management career for women and her investing approach. An edited version of the conversation follows.

Barron's: What is keeping your clients up at night now?

Holly Newman Kroft: There are a lot of concerns in today's market. I think there's a concern about inflation. There's concern about the market being on a complete upward tear and about the market being overvalued. I think there's a concern with geopolitics and the price of oil. I also think my clients are worried about inflation and the domestic political situation that we're in. Market concentration is another concern. This is a market where 10 stocks are driving more than 50% of the returns of the S&P 500 index.

How do you craft portfolios to weather the uncertainty?

This a lesson from the financial crisis of 2008-09. The most important thing

for clients is establishing an investment policy statement that properly reflects their investment objectives and their risk profile. Because what we learned in the market leading up to the financial crisis is that everyone feels comfortable taking more risk when the market continues to move up. But when you have volatility and the market goes down, you need to have a portfolio that allows you to continue to live your life and to be able to sleep at night and not overreact so that you're selling at very inopportune times.

We spend a lot of time up front with our clients establishing their investment policy statement and determining how much of their money should be allocated to fixed income, to equities, and to alternatives, and then over the course of the relationship, we tactically rebalance as market conditions or their personal situations change.

How do you calm clients when they get especially nervous about market fluctuations and other stressors?

We always go back to the asset allocation, and I say, "Remember, if you are underperforming a market that's driven by 10 stocks by a little bit, I'm OK with that, and you should be OK with that, too."

We are most often investing irreplaceable wealth. Most of our clients have either inherited their wealth or earned it, but they're unlikely to do it again. So, my No. 1 focus is on preservation of capital and, No. 2, on responsible growth of capital. If you think about it, from peak to trough in the financial crisis, the market was down 50%. To get back to whole, you need to be up 100%. If you protect on the downside, you have less to make it up on the comeback.

OUR ADVISOR RANKING AT A GLANCE

Holly Newman Kroft

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When you have volatility and the market goes down, you need to have a portfolio that allows you to continue to live your life and to be able to sleep at night and not overreact so that you're selling at very inopportune times."

ents' different levels of success: career advancements, building a family, changing homes, navigating different decisions and failures and successes. If people knew that's what we do, that's pretty attractive to women—and men, frankly.

Would you share two or three of the keys that have enabled you to have a successful career?

The first is leading with listening. Listen more than you speak so you understand what's important to the client, prospective client, partner, anybody. I'm a pretty good listener. I'm also a really good educator. I teach my team that our biggest value comes from educating our clients about their investments, about maybe new products, about things that they read about or that we want to introduce to them. Maybe it's educating them about the public market versus the private market or taxes or how a decision changes things. I always want to teach something new to a client every time they talk to me.

We work hard to earn trust every day. And trust isn't built through just portfolio performance or large sweeping wins. It's actually just showing up consistently, doing what you say you're going to do, and communicating proactively. We do a ton of outreach. Our phones don't ring. You probably don't believe me, but they don't ring. Because we talk to our clients every 30 days. We've built processes to reach out to each client, to get ahead of questions and be the educator. Last is having humility. I don't have it all figured out; nobody does. I'm always a student of the game. I'm always reading new books about how to be better at what I deliver to clients. I'm always trying to learn more about the markets, always trying to be better, and I think that also is a key to success.

How do you relax and recharge outside of work?

I don't know if there's much relaxing in my lifestyle right now. I have three teenagers. My boys are lacrosse players, so last week, for example, I was in D.C. for their tournaments. We spend a lot of time with our kids, making sure they have success in the things they're excited about.

How do you take care of yourself when you're taking care of everybody else?

I do take care of a lot of people: my clients, my team, my family. I get up early in the morning and exercise. I give back a lot to community groups, and I find that rewarding. My son and I are in a mom-and-son volunteer organization, and we do a lot of volunteer hours together. That's relaxing to me, to cut apples that go out to the homeless, and I get to do that with my son. We're active people; we travel. We live on a lake, so we spend a lot of time doing stuff with the kids out on the lake. We try to do one big vacation every three to four years.

Thanks, Corina. ■

Corina Davis, Merrill Wealth Mgmt, Seattle	
Team Assets	\$1.5 billion
Typical Account Size	\$5 million
Typical Net Worth	\$8 million

How did you realign portfolios in March, when the market dipped?

At the end of the first quarter, we went a little bit overweight on U.S. large-caps because the market had a little pull-back in valuation, and we wanted to be opportunistic.

We still like small-caps. We view international developed markets as a nice complement to both the S&P 500 and the emerging market space because it is less tech-focused and less growth-oriented.

People are very worried about interest rates being higher for longer and the punitive nature of those higher rates on borrowers, but for investors, being able to capture a healthy after-tax return with little or no volatility is incredibly compelling. We also really like alternatives, both for the opportunity for outsize returns and for subsectors of alternatives like commodities that can act as a hedge against inflation and geopolitical risk.

Are there sectors you particularly like right now?

At the end of the second quarter, we saw a broadening out of equity performance, and we really like seeing that. Both the equal-weighted index and the Russell 1000 Value Index are outperforming the S&P 500, which means the reliance on the Magnificent Seven to drive market performance isn't present in today's market. In fact, right now, the Magnificent Seven is a detractor. The broadening out suggests that investors are recognizing the value of many of the other 493 stocks in the S&P 500 that have been unloved and largely unappreciated in the past few years.

Are there sectors you're avoiding?

I'm not really avoiding sectors. We tend

BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

to use more passive investments in more efficient asset classes like the U.S. large-cap space. In subsectors like small-caps, emerging markets, private equity, and private debt, manager selection is critical because you rely on those managers to stay focused on their strategies, not to be performance-chasers, and to have a very strong bottom-up analysis for all of the companies that they include in their portfolios. This can make an especially meaningful difference in the alternative space. In private equity, the difference between a top-tier private-equity fund and a bottom-tier private-equity fund is quite a large gap, whereas in a more efficient asset class like the U.S. large-cap space, it's harder for an active manager to make a meaningful difference.

How many of the people on your team are women?

There are four women on my nine-member team: a marketing coordinator, two client administrators, and me. The team also includes a dedicated investment strategist and chief operating officer. I am the sole business generator.

Are you doing anything specific to create more roles that are attractive to women?

I don't really believe in that. I believe in finding the right person for the job. I think every professional, male or female, has to own their priorities and know what they want out of their career. For me, that was being able to build a very robust and successful business and have some control over my schedule so that I could also be a very successful parent. I felt that was much more doable in personal finance than it is in corporate finance. That said, I think every job on my team is available for and attractive to a woman.

What do you think the industry should be doing to change the demographics?

It's difficult because I think society in general is still somewhat traditional. We live in a world where women are still seen by society as the primary parent. My belief is you can do it all; you just have to have the right people surrounding and supporting you. I think the industry needs to do a better job of communicating that to women. Also, I think maybe some women just don't try, because it's daunting. As a woman, you can be in this busi-

ness and succeed. You could be a member of my team and have a very satisfying and successful career, whether you're an advisor or a relationship manager. You could be an investment strategist. You could be a client administrator. I don't think that there is a role on my team that wouldn't be attractive to a woman.

What advice do you have for next-generation female financial advisors?

It's up to you to own your priorities, not be embarrassed or ashamed of them, and to find a career that fits your priorities. So, rather than trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, find a job that fits with you. I wanted to run a business, build a business, and have a robust career, but I needed a career where I could have a little bit of control over my schedule.

I can say to a client, "Sure, I could speak to you at 4 o'clock, but I'm going to be calling you from my child's soccer finals." I always give my clients my cell-phone number, and I say, "Please use it anytime. But if you call me from, say, 7 to 9 p.m., I might not be able to pick up because I might be doing homework or having family dinner, and I will call you after." I think my clients really respect that. I think women, especially, run into problems when they don't own their priorities.

On a personal note, what do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to cook. I take a lot of pride in hosting my family and my friends in my home. I much prefer that to going out to dinner. I think there's nothing more meaningful and more special than being in someone's home and sharing a meal and having a lot of laughs around the table. I set a beautiful table. I pay attention to every detail. And I take a lot of pride in that, whether it's my friends or my family, or my clients who really become my friends, because this business is such a personal business.

Thank you, Holly. 📍

Holly Newman Kroft, Neuberger Berman, New York	
Team Assets	\$4.5 billion
Typical Account Size	\$15.6 million
Typical Net Worth	\$20 million



PHOTOGRAPH BY EVELYN FREJA

WHAT THE PROS ARE DOING

What They Learned On the Way Up

Wealth management may be a mostly male bastion, but plenty of women are rising through the ranks. We asked four successful female professionals to share important career insights. Following are edited versions of their comments.

BY STEVE GARMHAUSEN



Be Authentic

Liza Carey, Private Wealth Advisor, the Erdmann Group, Merrill Private Wealth Management

I work alongside my partners with CEOs and founders and their families to help them simplify and manage their financial lives. Our average family has around \$40 million, up to billionaires. I was in the Chief Investment Office at Merrill for the start of my career and knew our team through that. Later, I did a short stint in the out-sourced chief investment officer role at Morgan Stanley. I called our team's founder, Jeff Erdmann, asking for advice on what I was going to do next, and he persuaded me to join them.

I love what I do; I don't think I could work as much as I do otherwise. The blend of investing and relationships is so rewarding. My dad was on the stock exchange for over 35 years, so when I was in preschool I was playing with bull and bear stuffed animals. I've been investing since I can remember. I love working through complexities for families, whether it's investing or planning, but also helping them think

about their values and dynamics around money over multiple generations.

One thing I wish someone had told me early on was that authenticity, which felt vulnerable or unprofessional to me at first, is actually the secret to building relationships with families. And from the female perspective, the industry is seeking that out now. Having that as something I can provide to the families we work with has been really valuable.



Help Families Communicate

Mallory Findley, Head of Family Dynamics and Financial Education, Rockefeller Capital Management

My job is all about preparing families for wealth. We help family members gain confidence in themselves and in one another, so they can be more connected in their relationships and more effective in how they steward wealth.

My exposure to the world of wealth management started when I was very young. I grew up with a financial advisor for a dad, which meant money wasn't a taboo topic; I was encouraged to understand and use it intentionally. My first job out of school was at UBS' global family office. From there I went to work as a chief of staff for a Manhattan-based single-family office in a financial planning capacity, and then worked in the same

capacity for a [registered investment advisor firm]. Just before joining Rockefeller, I was working for Morgan Stanley on content for an internal designation for financial advisors. Each job gave me pieces of knowledge that are really relevant for what I do today.

I love helping families feel more connected. We have an exercise called wealth and values, where we give family members the opportunity to share their greatest aspirations and the things they're most grateful for. We ask what feeling, thing, or experience they'd like to gift to someone they love. It's special to see how proud parents are of the ways their kids answer.



Take a Team Approach

Michelle Young, Private Wealth Advisor, President, Confetti Wealth at Ameriprise

I've been an advisor for 27 years at Ameriprise. Even though I manage a team of 24 and focus heavily on strategy, team development, and the client experience, I still work directly with clients every day. My primary responsibility is helping ensure that our clients receive thoughtful, personalized advice that helps them achieve what matters most to them. I also spend a significant amount of my time mentoring advisors.

One of the most important career decisions I made was realizing I couldn't do everything myself. Early on, I thought success meant saying yes to every opportunity and trying to be everything to everyone. I learned that growth comes from focusing on where we create the most value and to surround myself with talented people who share my values and vision.

Another pivotal decision was investing in people: building a strong team, mentoring future leaders, and creating a culture where individuals can grow has been one of the biggest drivers of our success. With the right people around you, you can serve clients at an extremely high

level and create something much better than you could ever do yourself.

For those starting in the business today, I think you should look at starting in a team environment. Finding the right mentor, somebody you can learn from, who you can trust, who's going to show you the ropes, is one of the most important things you can do.



Mentor New Advisors

Beth Smith, Private Wealth Advisor, Chase Group, Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management

I began my career as an estate-planning attorney and was initially a trust, tax, and estate-planning specialist for Morgan Stanley before transitioning to this team five years ago. Our clients are mostly entrepreneurs, co-founders, and general partners of funds. Our team has been on Sand Hill Road [the epicenter of Silicon Valley venture capital] for almost 40 years, which puts us at the center of innovation. I think my expertise in helping founders and executives here plan for liquidity events is pretty meaningful.

I love working with clients and the relationships we build with families. We start to work with a lot of the co-founders and executives early on, often many years before the liquidity event. My role in working with the next generation is really fun, as well. I love taking complicated topics and making them understandable, and helping them share their families' values.

There definitely aren't enough women in the industry, and I would love to see more. I've been working with a lot of college kids to help them build their careers. I tell them that confidence comes from preparation. The more you understand, the more comfortable you'll be to speak up at the table. I also tell them to find good mentors. I've had other strong, successful women share some great, invaluable advice along the way, and that has been impactful on my career. 📍

PHOTOGRAPHS, FROM LEFT: MERRILL PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGEMENT; ROCKEFELLER CAPITAL MANAGEMENT; AMERIPRISE FINANCIAL; MORGAN STANLEY PRIVATE WEALTH MANAGEMENT

BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

Top 100 Women Financial Advisors 2026

Here are America's Top Women Financial Advisors, as identified by *Barron's*. The ranking reflects the volume of assets overseen by the advisors, revenue generated for their firms, and the quality of the advisors' practices.

1. Deborah Montaperto
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
Palm Beach, Fla.

2025 Rank: 1
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$290.9
Typical Account (mil): \$150
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$250

2. Colleen O'Callaghan
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 5
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$8.2
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

3. Holly Newman Kroft
Neuberger Berman
New York

2025 Rank: 2
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.5
Typical Account (mil): \$15.6
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

4. Elaine Meyers
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 7
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$7.4
Typical Account (mil): \$45
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

5. Stephanie J. Stiefel
Neuberger Berman
New York

2025 Rank: 3
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$4.4
Typical Account (mil): \$15
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

6. Johanna Walters
Merrill Wealth Management
Blue Bell, Pa.

2025 Rank: 6
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$7.6
Typical Account (mil): \$16
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$22

7. Cheryl L. Young
Rockefeller Capital Management
Los Gatos, Calif.

2025 Rank: 11
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.7
Typical Account (mil): \$12
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$57

8. Susan Kaplan
Kaplan Financial Services
Newton, Mass.

2025 Rank: 4
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.5
Typical Account (mil): \$8
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

9. Lisa Detanna
Raymond James
Beverly Hills, Calif.

2025 Rank: 8
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$4.4
Typical Account (mil): \$15
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$35

10. Dagny Maidman
Cresset
Bozeman, Mont.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$6.2
Typical Account (mil): \$76
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

11. Kelly Westmoreland
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Atlanta

2025 Rank: 10
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$6.5
Typical Account (mil): \$28.8
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$60

12. Michelle Mayer
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Naples, Fla.

2025 Rank: 15
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.8
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

13. Tracey Gluck
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Los Angeles

2025 Rank: 9
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$4.8
Typical Account (mil): \$15
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$27

14. Patti Brennan
Key Financial
West Chester, Pa.

2025 Rank: 16
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.8
Typical Account (mil): \$2
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4

15. Melissa Corrado-Harrison
UBS Private Wealth Management
Denver

2025 Rank: 40
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.8
Typical Account (mil): \$75
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$200

16. Laila Pence
Pence Wealth Management
Newport Beach, Calif.

2025 Rank: 17
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.2
Typical Account (mil): \$2.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

17. Brenna Saunders
Creative Planning
Overland Park, Kan.

2025 Rank: 12
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.8
Typical Account (mil): \$37.9
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

18. Kimberlee Orth
Ameriprise Financial
Wilmington, Del.

2025 Rank: 18
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.9
Typical Account (mil): \$9
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$21.4

19. Jessica Culpepper
Creative Planning
Overland Park, Kan.

2025 Rank: 13
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.2
Typical Account (mil): \$45.9
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

20. Debra Brede
D.K. Brode Investment Mgmt Co. | Focus Partners Wealth
Needham, Mass.

2025 Rank: 21
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$2.1
Typical Account (mil): \$3
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4

21. Molly Rothove
Creative Planning
Overland Park, Kan.

2025 Rank: 14
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.7
Typical Account (mil): \$58.6
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

22. Megan Cooney
Mathias Merrill Wealth Management
Boston

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.8
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

23. Diane Compardo
Moneta Group
Clayton, Mo.

2025 Rank: 25
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.9
Typical Account (mil): \$15
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

24. Melissa Spickler
Merrill Wealth Management
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.

2025 Rank: 37
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$2
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

25. Eleni Mavromati
Merrill Private Wealth Management
Los Angeles

2025 Rank: 22
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations, Endowments
Team Assets (bil): \$72.1
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$125

26. Gillian Yu
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 24
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$9.1
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

27. Judy Fredrickson
UBS Private Wealth Management
Wayzata, Minn.

2025 Rank: 27
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$7.1
Typical Account (mil): \$30
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

28. Jennifer Marcontell
Ameriprise Financial
Mont Belvieu, Texas

2025 Rank: 30
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.2
Typical Account (mil): \$3.6
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4.2

29. Valerie Garcia Houts
Merrill Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 23
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$41.3
Typical Account (mil): \$70
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$250

30. Jana Shoulders
Mariner
Tulsa, Okla.

2025 Rank: 53
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.2
Typical Account (mil): \$4.1
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$9

31. Louise Armour
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

2025 Rank: 35
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$3.4
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

32. Alyssa Moeder
Merrill Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 59
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$9.8
Typical Account (mil): \$35
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$150

33. Carolyn Frager
Creative Planning
Overland Park, Kan.

2025 Rank: 54
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$8.2
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

34. Inna Kelly
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 33
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.2
Typical Account (mil): \$20
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

35. Melissa Budnik
Merrill Wealth Management
Atlanta

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$116
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$7

36. Virgil Kahl
Spring Ridge Financial Group
Wyomissing, Pa.

2025 Rank: 34
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.7
Typical Account (mil): \$1.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$2.5

37. Michelle Young
Ameriprise Financial
Edina, Minn.

2025 Rank: 29
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2
Typical Account (mil): \$2.3
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4.8

38. Charla McIntyre
Fields Ameriprise Financial
Hurst, Texas

2025 Rank: 26
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.3
Typical Account (mil): \$2.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$4.5

39. Corina Davis
Merrill Wealth Management
Seattle

2025 Rank: 42
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.5
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$8

40. Amy Li
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 65
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$9.4
Typical Account (mil): \$100
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$500

41. Ali Flynn Phillips
Obermeyer Wealth Partners
Aspen, Colo.

2025 Rank: 79
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.1
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

42. Courtney Moore
Merrill Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 36
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$11.3
Typical Account (mil): \$70
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

43. Linda Modico
UBS Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 61
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$7.9
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

44. Wendy Holmes
UBS Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 46
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$2
Typical Account (mil): \$25
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

45. Mary Mullin
Merrill Wealth Management
Boston

2025 Rank: 38
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.9
Typical Account (mil): \$7.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$40

46. Susan Kim
Ameriprise Financial
Vienna, Va.

2025 Rank: 51
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.9
Typical Account (mil): \$2.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$6

47. Marilyn Mantziaris
Janney Montgomery Scott
Glastonbury, Conn.

2025 Rank: 32
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.2
Typical Account (mil): \$17
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$500

48. Kristina Van Liew
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
Chicago

2025 Rank: 52
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments
Team Assets (bil): \$7
Typical Account (mil): \$150
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

49. Joanne Zhong
UBS Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 55
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$5.1
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

50. Sharon Oberlander
Merrill Wealth Management
Chicago

2025 Rank: 45
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.7
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$12

51. Catherine Evans
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 49
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments
Team Assets (bil): \$3.5
Typical Account (mil): \$15
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$40

52. Louise Gunderson
UBS Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 47
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.5
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

53. W Janet Dougherty
Cresset
Chicago

2025 Rank: 50
Client Types: Retail, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$6
Typical Account (mil): \$25
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

54. Nazie Saffari-Moini
Merrill Wealth Management
Beverly Hills, Calif.

2025 Rank: 66
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.2
Typical Account (mil): \$2.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

55. Wen Nottebohm
Cresset
Atlanta

2025 Rank: 41
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$9.2
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

56. Maria Petti
MAI Capital Management
Cleveland

2025 Rank: 92
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.8
Typical Account (mil): \$10.4
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$51.8

57. Marcie Behman
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Boston

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$35
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$65

58. Donna Di Ianni
Merrill Wealth Management
Aspen, Colo.

2025 Rank: 39
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$2.2
Typical Account (mil): \$30
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$50

59. Lori Van Dusen
LVW Advisors
Pittsford, N.Y.

2025 Rank: 60
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$15
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$35

60. Julie Parisio Roy
Badgley Phelps
Wealth Managers
Seattle

2025 Rank: 57
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$1.9
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$6

61. Kimberley Hatchett
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 83
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments
Team Assets (bil): \$9.7
Typical Account (mil): \$25
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

62. Lisa Reed
Neuberger Berman
Los Angeles

2025 Rank: 48
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.2
Typical Account (mil): \$8
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

63. Jill Bobigan
UBS Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 70
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$3
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

64. Renee Fourcade
UBS Wealth Management
Los Angeles

2025 Rank: 71
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$17.5
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

65. Ann Marie Etergino
RBC Wealth Management
Chevy Chase, Md.

2025 Rank: 74
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

66. Diane Hart
UBS Wealth Management
Pasadena, Calif.

2025 Rank: 84
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.1
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$80

67. Megan Bailey
Merrill Wealth Management
Blue Bell, Pa.

2025 Rank: 64
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$7.6
Typical Account (mil): \$8.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$11

BARRON'S SPECIAL REPORT

Top 250 Private Wealth Management Teams 2026

68. Melinda Johnston
Raymond James
Fort Worth, Texas

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.5
Typical Account (mil): \$3
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

69. Donna Joyner
Merrill Wealth Management
Alpharetta, Ga.

2025 Rank: 67
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.5
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

70. Kathleen Roeser
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Deerfield, Ill.

2025 Rank: 69
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$3.2
Typical Account (mil): \$20
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

71. Kimberly St. Pierre
Ameriprise Financial
Plymouth Meeting, Pa.

2025 Rank: 76
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.9
Typical Account (mil): \$2.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$6

72. Mercedes Paratje
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 80
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$6.6
Typical Account (mil): \$25
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$150

73. Susan Kingsolver
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 82
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.4
Typical Account (mil): \$20
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

74. Anna Winderbaum
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 77
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.6
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

75. Catherine Fang
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
Menlo Park, Calif.

2025 Rank: 81
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.3
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

76. Nancy Daoud
Ameriprise Financial
Oxford, Conn.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.7
Typical Account (mil): \$2
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$8

77. Emily Bach
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Orinda, Calif.

2025 Rank: 99
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.9
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$11

78. Katie Partridge
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
Menlo Park, Calif.

2025 Rank: 43
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$64.4
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

79. Beth Smith
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
Menlo Park, Calif.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$36.9
Typical Account (mil): \$75
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$100

80. Emmeline Swanson
Merrill Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 75
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW, Foundations, Endowments, Institutional
Team Assets (bil): \$41.3
Typical Account (mil): \$70
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$250

81. Teresa Jacobsen
UBS Private Wealth Management
Stamford, Conn.

2025 Rank: 93
Client Type: UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2
Typical Account (mil): \$10.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

82. Carolyn Taylor
Weatherly Asset Management
Del Mar, Calif.

2025 Rank: 62
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.6
Typical Account (mil): \$4.2
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$7.5

83. Joni Abalos
Merrill Wealth Management
Houston

2025 Rank: 72
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2
Typical Account (mil): \$3.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

84. Alma Guimarin
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
San Jose, Calif.

2025 Rank: 88
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.5
Typical Account (mil): \$7
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$15

85. Kara Boccella
Serenus Wealth Advisors
Santa Monica, Calif.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.5
Typical Account (mil): \$12
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

86. Victoria Bailey
Morgan Stanley Private Wealth Management
Menlo Park, Calif.

2025 Rank: 68
Client Types: UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$8
Typical Account (mil): \$50
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$200

87. Lindsey Holton
William Blair
Chicago

2025 Rank: 100
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$8.6
Typical Account (mil): \$18.5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

88. Mindy Ying
Wealth Enhancement Group
San Marino, Calif.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$3.6
Typical Account (mil): \$5
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

89. Jackie Moss
William Blair
Chicago

2025 Rank: 86
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.3
Typical Account (mil): \$30
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$40

90. Rebecca Glasgow
RBC Wealth Management
Atlanta

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$6.1
Typical Account (mil): \$25
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

91. Geri Eisenman Pell
Ameriprise Financial
Rye Brook, N.Y.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$7.7
Typical Account (mil): \$3
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$8

92. Kathleen Grasmeder
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Glens Falls, N.Y.

2025 Rank: 87
Client Types: Retail, HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$1.7
Typical Account (mil): \$1
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$5

93. Leslie Lauer
RBC Wealth Management
Atlanta

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$6.1
Typical Account (mil): \$25
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$75

94. Maureen Raihle
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Palm Beach, Fla.

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$2.8
Typical Account (mil): \$30
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$60

95. Sarah Mercurio
William Blair
Chicago

2025 Rank: 90
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$5.9
Typical Account (mil): \$20
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$30

96. Patricia Baum
RBC Wealth Management
Annapolis, Md.

2025 Rank: 78
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.2
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

97. Catherine Chen
RBC Wealth Management
San Francisco

2025 Rank: 96
Client Types: HNW, UHNW, Foundations
Team Assets (bil): \$3.6
Typical Account (mil): \$20
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

98. Rebecca DeCesaro
J.P. Morgan Wealth Management
Portland, Ore.

2025 Rank: 97
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$3.4
Typical Account (mil): \$12
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$20

99. Hillary Cullen
UBS Private Wealth Management
New York

2025 Rank: 58
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$4.9
Typical Account (mil): \$20
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$40

100. Christina Yuni
Morgan Stanley Wealth Management
Palo Alto

2025 Rank: N
Client Types: HNW, UHNW
Team Assets (bil): \$2.3
Typical Account (mil): \$10
Typical Net Worth (mil): \$25

N=not ranked, HNW=high net worth, UHNW=ultrahigh net worth



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